

ection

SATURDAY

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INDEPENDENT

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Hope pledges faith at York Minster



Amazing grace: The Right Rev David Hope kneels during his enthronement as Archbishop of York yesterday at York Minster. He succeeds Dr Habgood to the second most important post in the Church of England. Photograph: PA

Angry Major turns heat on Adams

'A man of peace or spokesman for terrorism?'

DONALD MACINTYRE and DAVID MCINTYRE

John Major yesterday responded to a ferociously worded IRA pledge not to "surrender" its arms by challenging the Sinn Fein President, Gerry Adams, to decide whether he was now a man of peace or the "straightforward spokesman of a terrorist organisation".

But although Mr Major hit back angrily at an IRA statement rejecting the British Government's "ludicrous" demand to begin handing over its arms, as a precondition to all-party talks, both governments yesterday agreed to press ahead with plans for a "twin-track" approach to preliminary talks on arms and the political future of Northern Ireland.

The IRA statement represented an affirmation of its previously-stated insistence that decommissioning could only happen after political negotiations and not before.

This position appeared to have been directed largely towards the international body on decommissioning, headed by the former US Senator George Mitchell, which is due to start work in New York this weekend.

It did not, however, rule out Republican co-operation with the Mitchell commission and, in fact, Sinn Fein has confirmed it will send a delegation to meet the international body.

This was crucial for the work of the commission, since its deliberations would have been closed to meaningless in the absence of any Republican input.

The Taoiseach, John Bruton, said he understood Sinn Fein would speak to the international body on the issue of IRA weapons.

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams said his party's position was unchanged by the IRA statement, which he described as "restating the obvious and widely acknowledged reality of the current situation". He said everyone, including Mr Major and Unionist leaders, "knows that none of the armed groups is prepared to disarm at this time".

The Prime Minister challenged Sinn Fein to show its true colours and denounce the IRA for refusing to give up weapons.

He angrily accused the Republican paramilitary leadership of delivering a "slap in the face" to the rising peace hopes of the people.

Unionists claimed the IRA statement had effectively killed off the "twin-track" approach of combining movement towards full talks with arms decommissioning, overseen by an international commission.

However, London and Dublin insisted the momentum for peace triggered by the vast crowds which greeted US President Bill Clinton last week would be maintained.

Mr Major said: "The message of all those people to the paramilitaries was that their day was over and that now was the time to put away guns, give up violence forever and make peace."

"This is a moment of trial for Mr Adams. Does he believe what he has been saying or has he been trying to deceive people? We'll soon know," he told reporters in his Huntingdon constituency.

"Gerry Adams had better make up his mind what he wants. Is Gerry Adams the man who wants to bring peace to Northern Ireland or is he a straightforward spokesman for

a terrorist organisation who continues producing intransigent statements and putting a bottleneck in the way of peace?"

The IRA has refused from the start to hand over weapons and few in London or Dublin were surprised at the defiant nature of the new statement.

The message, released in Dublin, said: "There is no question of the IRA meeting the ludicrous demand for a surrender of IRA weapons either through the front or the back door."

But ministers believe the pressure is now on Sinn Fein to find a way around the logjam caused by the stockpile of IRA weapons, with Whitehall sources again insisting that the British Government was not demanding the surrender of arms.

Sinn Fein negotiator Martin McGuinness added: "What the British Government is demanding is the humiliation and surrender of the IRA and I don't believe that is on offer."

The mood in Dublin was more conciliatory, with Mr Bruton refusing to be drawn into the argument and remaining confident that Sinn Fein would discuss IRA guns with the international commission.

"It is better to concentrate on facts and the fact is that Sinn Fein stated that they will speak authoritatively to the international body on the issue of IRA weapons."

But Dick Spring, the Irish Deputy Prime Minister, said: "We all saw what the people of Northern Ireland wanted last week in Derry and Belfast and also what the people in the Republic wanted. The opportunity is there for us and we have all got to take that."

Peace process, page 2

Buy the Independent today and get the Independent on Sunday for only

See page 3

Simon Hopkinson saves you from Christmas pudding



How to shine this season

Damien Hirst: How to follow a dead cow

University threat to cut students

JUDITH JIDD Education editor

Angry university vice-chancellors last night threatened to cut the number of university places next September unless the Government reverses spending cuts announced in the Budget.

At a stormy meeting in London, they refused to hear a speech by Education Minister Eric Forth which was to have been read by a senior civil servant because Mr Forth is ill.

They tore up the proposed agenda and several threatened to start charging students fees to make up the shortfall in funding caused by the cuts. They also agreed to back the introduction of a new type of student loans scheme under which students would have to repay money for their tuition fees.

At present students borrow money from the Government for their living costs but tuition fees are funded by the taxpayer.

The meeting of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals issued a statement saying that the Budget cuts of 31 per cent for building and equipment funds in one year were "catastrophic".

Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, secured a better deal than last year for schools in the Budget at the expense of higher and further education. Ministers were anxious to stop a vigorous campaign against cuts by parents and governors.

Universities and colleges have been told that from next September they will have to raise a substantial proportion of money for buildings from private sources as part of the Treasury's Private Finance Initiative.

Professor Gareth Roberts, the committee's chairman, accused the Government of cowardice in refusing to consider a graduate contribution to tuition fees. "Now we have no option. Either we get more money to teach our students or we must reduce their numbers."

The committee refused to hear Tony Clarke, deputy secretary at the Department for Education and Employment, and sent him away with this message for Mrs Shephard: "We are very concerned and upset over the severity of the Chancellor's statement, which we believe will have a catastrophic effect on universities in 1996/7."

"The Private Finance Scheme that is not well established, and which has limited applicability, cannot possibly provide the essential resources we need for our buildings and equipment. Even those things it could support cannot work

when universities are not given the income stream needed to support the PFI initiatives." Universities receive a fixed sum for each student. Any reduction in student numbers would have to be agreed with the Higher Education Funding Council, the quango that allocates funds to universities.

A council spokesman said its board would be meeting next week to consider its response to the Budget. Vice-chancellors will meet again next month to discuss cutting student numbers.

The Department for Education and Employment said: "It has been a tight public spending settlement all round. Within higher education, capital funding has been reduced but current funding has been maintained. The higher education sector has been vigorous in pursuing partnerships with the private sector. So far some £1.6 billion has been provided under the Private Finance Initiative."

No university is likely to go it alone and charge students fees but the committee's agreement to back loans for fees after years of indecision is significant. A Bill to privatise the student loans scheme is going through Parliament but it does not involve loans for fees.

The vice-chancellors' preferred scheme differs from the Government's because there would be no time limit for loan repayment and because repayments would vary according to income.

Top scientist challenges official line on beef ...

CHARLES ARTHUR Science Correspondent

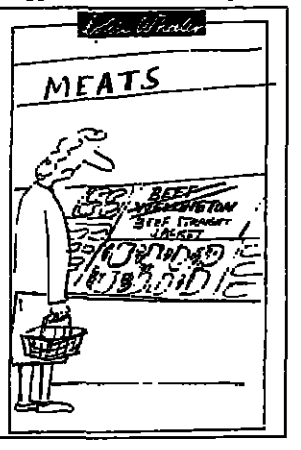
The Government's top scientist on mad cow disease yesterday refused to support the advice of Stephen Dorell, the Secretary of State for Health, that there is "no conceivable risk" of the disease passing to humans.

"I freely admit that we cannot yet give anyone absolute guarantees," said Professor John Pattison, who chairs the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC), an eight-strong team of scientists advising government on the risks posed by mad cow disease, or BSE, to humans.

Asked if he could defend Mr Dorell's statement, made earlier this week, Professor Pattison replied: "No, it's not possible at this moment to give the proof there's no connection between BSE and human disease."

Two independent consumer

groups, the Food Commission and the Consumers' Association, called for the committee to include consumer representatives, and for its work to be made answerable to Parliament rather than ministers. At present, Mr Dorell and Douglas Hogg, the minister of agriculture,



must approve appointments to SEAC, and decide what action to take on its advice. Public anxiety that BSE could be passed to humans, causing its human equivalent, Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), has grown in the past week. During that time, auction prices of British beef have fallen by about three per cent, and more than 1,150 schools have taken beef off their lunch menus.

Yesterday local authorities were also advised by the Advisory Body for Social Services catering to remove beef products such as beefburgers and sausages from child-care establishments.

Despite growing concern, the CJD Surveillance Unit, based in Edinburgh, told the Independent the overall trend is downward. Deaths from CJD are expected to fall compared to 1994, when there were 56 cases. So far this year there have been 29 cases.

... as ostriches lay a golden egg

SIMON PINCOMBE

The collapse in beef prices could make Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber another fortune. The composer has applied for permission to farm ostriches on his 4,000-acre Hampshire estate, which industry sources say could eventually be home for up to 100 birds.

The composer has been considering the project since he ate an ostrich steak in an American restaurant. But the timing is seen as shrewd. "It is an unpar-

alleled opportunity to provide the meat of the future," said Robin Higgins of the Ostrich Farming Corporation.

This year Britons are expected to eat 904,000 tons of beef and veal, a 25 per cent decline in consumption since 1976. And while ostrich meat is still an expensive novelty in Britain, costing between £9.95 and £15 a pound, farmers are reporting rocketing demand.

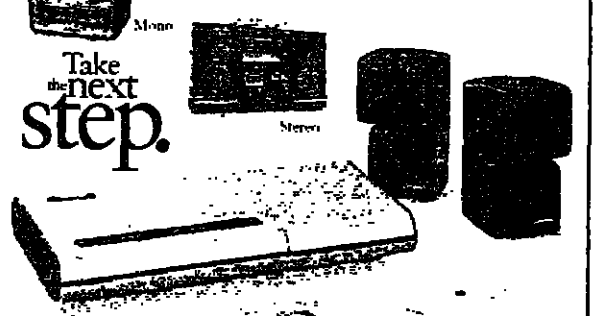
Sainsbury, Tesco and Asda have all approached ostrich farmers, seeking an alternative

meat that has been humanely farmed. The problem is that there are no slaughterhouse facilities in the UK which has kept the price of ostrich meat high. Sir Andrew has said he will breed birds and sell them but does not intend to send them directly to the slaughterhouse.

Ostriches are widely eaten in Belgium, France, Switzerland, the US and Australia. The meat, which tastes like fillet steak, has the lowest fat and cholesterol levels of any red, white or fish meat, except salmon.

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Hurd defends funding public services

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

A powerful "one nation" call on the Tory party not to "slash blindly at public services" in order to widen the gap between itself and Labour was launched yesterday by Douglas Hurd, the former Foreign Secretary.

Mr Hurd came strongly to the defence of Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, against right-wing critics of his Budget in a

speech which also went a long way to challenging the growing assumption among some senior Tories that the state needs to be dramatically "shrunk" to sustain competitiveness.

Mr Hurd acknowledged the desirability of cutting the "too high" rates of taxation. But he added in a speech in Bloxham, Oxfordshire, that only "among the unshirers of Westminster would it seem sensible medicine to sack more teachers

in the cause of cutting taxes even more deeply."

He declared: "A government which slashed blindly at public services, pleading some abstract moral imperative or invoking a political need to put clear water between itself and its opponents, will not regain sympathy but forfeit it."

Mr Hurd used all his authority as one of the most senior members of the Tory establishment to refute right-wing back-

benchers like David Evans, vice chairman of the 1922 Committee, who have claimed that Mr Clarke showed "no nose" for politics by failing to cut taxes and spending more deeply in last month's Budget.

But his speech will also be read as an important contribution to the continuing debate among Tory strategists over whether the party should swing to the right in order to beat off the challenge from a mod-

ernised Labour Party. Giving what amounts to firm advice that it should not, the former Foreign Secretary said that Britain needs to strike a "sensible balance" between "reasonable taxation" and "reasonable public services."

He warned the Tories would not win the next election if "we rush into unreality."

Mr Hurd strongly criticised Labour for "proclaiming in the City of London" that they have

foregone high taxation while in "every constituency" Labour spokesmen imply a commitment to more spending on public services. Mr Hurd said that Hugh Gaitskell lost the 1959 election because British voters saw through the same "contradiction".

But he also pointed out that the Citizen's Charter has actually increased public expectations of higher public services. He added: "If we can achieve

growth in the economy at around 3 per cent a year and if we can keep the real increase in welfare expenditure at around 1 per cent then it is possible to sustain the essential services and still reduce taxation."

Mr Hurd said that "not even [Fidel] Castro" believes any more in the nostrum that "nationalisation, subsidies and high taxation" are the remedies for "inadequate" economic performance.

Peace Process: The situation is 'desperate but not serious'

Arms issue a symbol of lack of trust

DAVID MCKITTRICK
Ireland correspondent

The condition of the Irish peace process, in the wake of Thursday's late-night IRA statement and yesterday's flurry of rhetoric, appears to conform to the old Belfast saying that things are desperate but not serious.

Ever since the IRA cessation declaration of August 1994, the peace has almost always seemed reasonably solid but never secure. Punishment beatings, for example, have provided regular reminders that the IRA and the loyalist paramilitary groups are still out there.

The arms de-commissioning issue, which was at the centre of yesterday's exchanges, has served as a symbol of the patent lack of trust among the participants in the peace process. It remains the case that after many months of argument no middle way has yet emerged to bridge the gap between the government and the republicans.

The brief of the international body on de-commissioning, which is headed by former US Senator George Mitchell, is to attempt to reconcile the two positions and produce a report by mid-January. This is clearly a formidable task which will stretch the ingenuity of Senator Mitchell and his two colleagues, a Canadian and a Finn, to the limit. But in the meantime the peace process goes on and crucially, despite the impression given by some over-excited reporting yesterday, Sinn Féin have promised to cooperate fully with the Senator.

According to Sinn Féin vice-president Pat Doherty: "We will certainly submit our views on this whole de-commissioning issue. We will try and deal with this new phase of [the peace process] as positively as we possibly can." The political reality is that the republicans could not have boycotted the body, headed as it is by Presi-

dent Clinton, whose goodwill they are anxious to maintain.

The understanding for some time has been that Sinn Féin would not only talk to the international body but would do so "authoritatively," as the current inter-governmental jargon puts it. This is taken to mean that its representatives will not simply make the rhetorical point that it is a political party which has no arms. Rather, they will seriously engage on the arms issue, in effect speaking for the IRA.

Mr Mitchell and his colleagues are due to meet in New York for the first time this weekend, before travelling in about a week's time to Belfast and Dublin.

The primary objective of the IRA statement was to place on Mr Mitchell's desk an explicit and up-to-date reminder of the absolute republican position that "there is no question of the IRA meeting the ludicrous demand for a surrender of IRA weapons either through the front or the back door." The unmistakable message is to direct Mr Mitchell and his colleagues to look in other directions for routes out of the impasse.

From a republican point of view the British Government has adopted a headline stance by insisting, in the face of opposition from the Irish government and others, on adhering to the position that actual de-commissioning must take place before full-blown negotiations can start.

The British Government has resisted all calls to move away from this requirement or to fudge it; the IRA for its part has not softened either. The key question of the next few weeks will be whether Senator Mitchell can produce a magic formula which everyone can live with. His ability to do so will determine whether the situation deteriorates from the merely desperate to the really serious.



On parade: Trooper Mark Campbell, who is weighing his future with the Life Guards

Black Guardsman may quit over race

PETER VICTOR

Trooper Mark Campbell, the first black soldier in the Life Guards, may resign amid allegations of racial abuse. His decision will be a blow to the Prince of Wales's personal efforts to encourage recruitment of ethnic minorities into Household regiments.

The Ministry of Defence confirmed yesterday that allegations of racial abuse were being investigated. But the Independent understands that Tpr Campbell, the first black soldier to ride beside the Queen on state occasions, has declined to make an official complaint.

Tpr Campbell started his duties last August in a blaze of publicity having won the Jackson Shield for the best turn-out cavalryman during his 20-week training. "Race should

not be an issue, it's no problem to me," he said at the time.

His first public appearance was during the VJ Day commemorations as one of the 18 troopers escorting the Queen.

But the popular trooper faced two problems - the strain of being the solitary black face in the Household Cavalry and a serious skin complaint caused by the traditional plumed helmet and metal chin strap.

He received medical treatment for the rash but it did not improve. As he could no longer take part in ceremonial duties he was transferred to the regiment's training section at Windsor, but asked to return to the capital. He said one of the reasons he was unhappy at Windsor was because of racially abusive language. He admitted he had never been harmed and refused to make a complaint.

However, Army sources confirmed he could leave.

Accusations of racial abuse surfaced in the black newspaper *The Voice* which quotes the trooper through a friend as saying: "If people had to go through what I'm going through they wouldn't hang on for a week. When you have to make a decision between hanging on in there and your life, what are you going to choose?"

'Mad cow' fear sends price of beef crashing

NICHOLAS SCHOON

The price of beef continued to fall at cattle markets throughout Britain yesterday, and the blame was being put squarely on the latest BSE scare.

Normally prices at this time of year would be rising in the run up to Christmas, with high-

quality animals being brought to market. Instead prices were down by around 3 per cent compared to a week ago, according to the Meat and Livestock Commission.

"This fall is quite significant at a time when prices are usually at their firmest," said Duncan Sinclair, an economic policy

analyst with the commission.

More than a dozen auctions were held yesterday and on average the price per kilogram fell 4p to just over 120p. That fall wipes £25 off the price of a 600kg steer, which usually fetches over £700. Only at Louth in Lincolnshire, one of yesterday's largest markets, did prices

rise - by 4p a kilo compared to the previous week's prices.

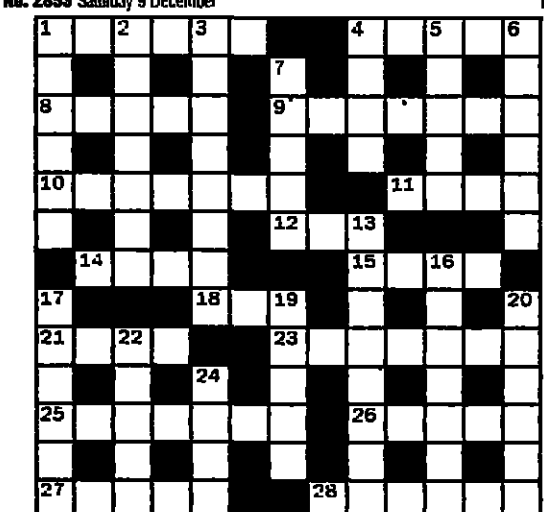
The Meat and Livestock Commission said it was likely that butchers would try to boost sales by cutting prices.

Prices have fallen because dealers are expecting a big drop in demand from the supermarkets and superstores who now sell most of Britain's beef to shoppers.

concise crossword

No. 2853 Saturday 9 December

By Phi



- ACROSS**
- Old name for 10p coin (6)
 - Fork prongs (5)
 - La... (opera house) (5)
 - Dilettante (7)
 - Building (7)
 - English queen (4)
 - Bone (3)
 - Moril (4)
 - Goblins (4)
 - Part of tennis match (3)
 - As well (4)
 - Get (7)
 - List (7)
 - Picture (5)
 - Respond (5)
 - State as true (6)
- DOWN**
- Putrefy (6)
 - Simple wind instrument (7)
 - Romans, say (8)
 - Shadow (4)
 - Stocking material (5)
 - Place for film? (6)
 - Amphibious mammal (5)
 - Crunchy snacks (8)
 - E.g. man or ape (7)
 - Sword (6)
 - Attempted (5)
 - Late (6)
 - Opera comic (5)
 - Coin factory (4)

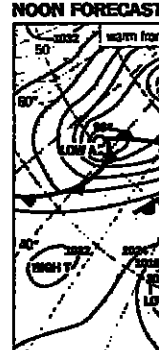
Solutions to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

Across: 1. Loo, 2. Oodoo (Incommodities), 3. Sled, 4. 9 Aint, 10. Hiss, 11. Cess, 12. Tender, 13. Sance, 14. Mutual, 15. Depot, 16. Rotor, 17. Mar, 18. Helm, 19. Blot, 20. Emerge, 21. Nobody, 22. Down, 23. Intact, 24. Oid, 25. Exeter, 26. Ogress, 27. Inch, 28. Sine, 29. Signature, 30. Kalshepp, 31. Cedar, 32. Ether, 33. Munific, 34. Lounge, 35. Domain, 36. Tiney, 37. Shift, 38. Hero

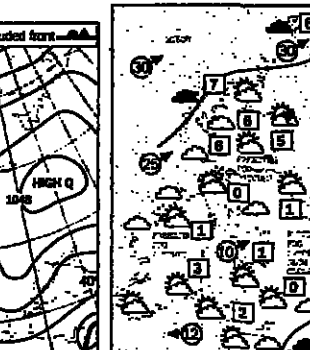
Notes

The weather

NOON FORECAST



Highs 8 and 7 have a strong ridge between them extending over the UK. Low A will move north-east, deepening, and obscuring Low Z.



TODAY'S FORECAST: Cloudy in the extreme south of England with patchy drizzle, but Wales and the rest of England should be dry with some sunnier spells. Early frost and freezing fog. N. Ireland and most of Scotland should also be dry with some sunnier spells. Western Scotland will be colder with drizzle and a brisk wind. Tonight much of the UK will be cold and frosty with freezing fog, but northern Scotland and southern coastal counties of England will be mostly frost-free.

WORLD WEATHER (continued from p. 1)

Area	C	F	Area	C	F
London	12.5	54.5	London	12.5	54.5
Birmingham	12.5	54.5	Birmingham	12.5	54.5
Manchester	12.5	54.5	Manchester	12.5	54.5
Newcastle	12.5	54.5	Newcastle	12.5	54.5
Glasgow	12.5	54.5	Glasgow	12.5	54.5
Belfast	12.5	54.5	Belfast	12.5	54.5

Area	C	F	Area	C	F
London	12.5	54.5	London	12.5	54.5
Birmingham	12.5	54.5	Birmingham	12.5	54.5
Manchester	12.5	54.5	Manchester	12.5	54.5
Newcastle	12.5	54.5	Newcastle	12.5	54.5
Glasgow	12.5	54.5	Glasgow	12.5	54.5
Belfast	12.5	54.5	Belfast	12.5	54.5

Area	C	F	Area	C	F
London	12.5	54.5	London	12.5	54.5
Birmingham	12.5	54.5	Birmingham	12.5	54.5
Manchester	12.5	54.5	Manchester	12.5	54.5
Newcastle	12.5	54.5	Newcastle	12.5	54.5
Glasgow	12.5	54.5	Glasgow	12.5	54.5
Belfast	12.5	54.5	Belfast	12.5	54.5

LIGHTING-UP TIMES

Area	Lighting-up	Darkening
London	5.52 am	7.54 pm
Birmingham	5.52 am	7.54 pm
Manchester	5.52 am	7.54 pm
Newcastle	5.52 am	7.54 pm
Glasgow	5.52 am	7.54 pm
Belfast	5.52 am	7.54 pm

AIR QUALITY

Area	Quality
London	Good
Birmingham	Good
Manchester	Good
Newcastle	Good
Glasgow	Good
Belfast	Good

Independent Weatherline

Area	Quality
London	Good
Birmingham	Good
Manchester	Good
Newcastle	Good
Glasgow	Good
Belfast	Good

SEND A BABY BOX TO BOSNIA THIS CHRISTMAS FOR ONLY £30

Disinfectant, nappies, washing materials - not what you'd think of giving someone for Christmas. But for a desperate mother in Bosnia trying to keep her child safe from infection, these basic essentials would mean the world.

It would also mean that someone somewhere is thinking of her, and her efforts to protect her child. Feed the Children has delivered baby boxes full of essential items directly into the hands of 11,000 mothers in Bosnia - many of whom will be sheltering in freezing schools, factories, and bombed-out houses this winter.

Please, if you possibly can, send a baby box to Bosnia this Christmas - and help a mother keep her baby safe.

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- 10 packets of baby oil
- 10 packets of baby lotion
- 10 packets of baby cream
- 10 packets of baby soap
- 10 packets of baby shampoo
- 10 packets of baby conditioner
- 10 packets of baby hair oil
- 10 packets of baby hair cream
- 10 packets of baby hair spray
- 10 packets of baby hair gel
- 10 packets of baby hair wax
- 10 packets of baby hair pomade
- 10 packets of baby hair mousse
- 10 packets of baby hair spray
- 10 packets of baby hair gel
- 10 packets of baby hair wax
- 10 packets of baby hair pomade
- 10 packets of baby hair mousse

With love from a friend...

Call 0990 600610 now to tell us how many baby boxes you would like to send.

OR please complete and return this form.

Please send _____ baby box(es) at £30 each on my behalf.

I enclose a cheque for £_____ (total amount) made payable to Feed the Children

OR Please debit £_____ from my ☐ Visa ☐ Access ☐ Switch

Card number _____

Last three digits of Switch card no. _____ Switch issue no. _____

Expiry date _____ Signature _____

Name (s) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

If you would like to send a message to a Bosnian mother, please send it with your donation and we will put it in your baby box. Please send to: Feed the Children, Dept 400, FREEPOST, Reading, RG1 1BR.

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سكنا من الامل

Wife claims Ashby threatened to kill her

REBECCA FOWLER

The wife of David Ashby, the Tory MP, described her husband's alleged violent temper to a libel jury yesterday, and claimed he threatened to kill her when she found him entertaining an elderly male friend, whom she inferred was gay.

Silvana Ashby, 53, stepped into the witness box to give evidence for the second day against her husband in his libel case against the *Sunday Times*, and Andrew Neil, the paper's former editor. Mr Ashby denies he is homosexual.

When Mrs Ashby visited her husband's Ravensstone home, unannounced, in his Leicestershire, North West constituency, she said he attacked her with a carving knife. "I said 'if you are going to kill me do it, do it, if you've got the courage. I will be dead, but you will be in prison for ever'."

When Mr Ashby left his Italian wife in 1993, after 28 years of "tempestuous" marriage, he moved to a flat in south-west London, and Mrs Ashby believed that his neighbour, Dr Claran Kilduff, 32, was his homosexual partner. Both men

deny physical intimacy. Mrs Ashby visited her husband's flat and confronted Dr Kilduff on Christmas Eve 1993, after Mr Ashby refused an invitation to Christmas lunch with her and their daughter Alexandra, 27. They had a furious fight when Mrs Ashby said she saw a man putting his arm around Mr Ashby in the kitchen.

"I just couldn't take it. I shouted at him 'are you still saying you're on your own... and don't have anybody?'" she said. "He flew downstairs, came into the garden and put his hands round my neck, he tried to slap me and we had a fight outside. The grass was wet and we both fell over."

Mrs Ashby said she rushed inside and saw Dr Kilduff. "I said 'at last Kilduff, it's time you and I met'." She continued: "He didn't have any reaction whatsoever. He was calm and cool, he was extremely cold. He just passed in front of me, went into the study, picked up the telephone and said 'we've got an intruder in the flat. Can you please send someone as soon as possible'."

Mrs Ashby said her husband attacked her again in July this year when she went to Ravensstone. She found him with Edward O'Byrne, a retired civil servant who had suffered a stroke. According to Mrs Ashby, her husband said: "How dare you come here uninvited!" She said Mr Ashby then knocked her head on the wall, emptied her handbag, and threatened to set her skirt on fire with a cigarette lighter, and burn her face.

"I went into the kitchen, he took a very long knife, pointed it at me and said, 'I'm going to kill you'." Mrs Ashby said. "At the point of panic I dialled 999 and he pulled the plug out of the phone."

Seasonal spending: Survey reveals regional gift gap as retailers pin their hopes on key products to capture elusive business

All I want for Christmas is a high street recovery

GLENDIA COOPER

With only 16 shopping days to Christmas, if you're hoping for a good present this year you need to cultivate your 25-year-old female relatives in the Midlands.

As harassed parents around the country rush to buy Baywatch Barbies, Power Rangers, Action Men and Pogs in the final countdown to Christmas they can muse on the fact that the British spend £7bn on Christmas, so their kids can look forward to an average £75 worth of presents each.

The *Touche Ross Christmas Retail Survey 1995*, estimates the average consumer will be shelling out £440 each this year, being careful not to spend more than last year. The biggest share goes on gifts (£234) followed by £132 on food and drink and £74 on other items.

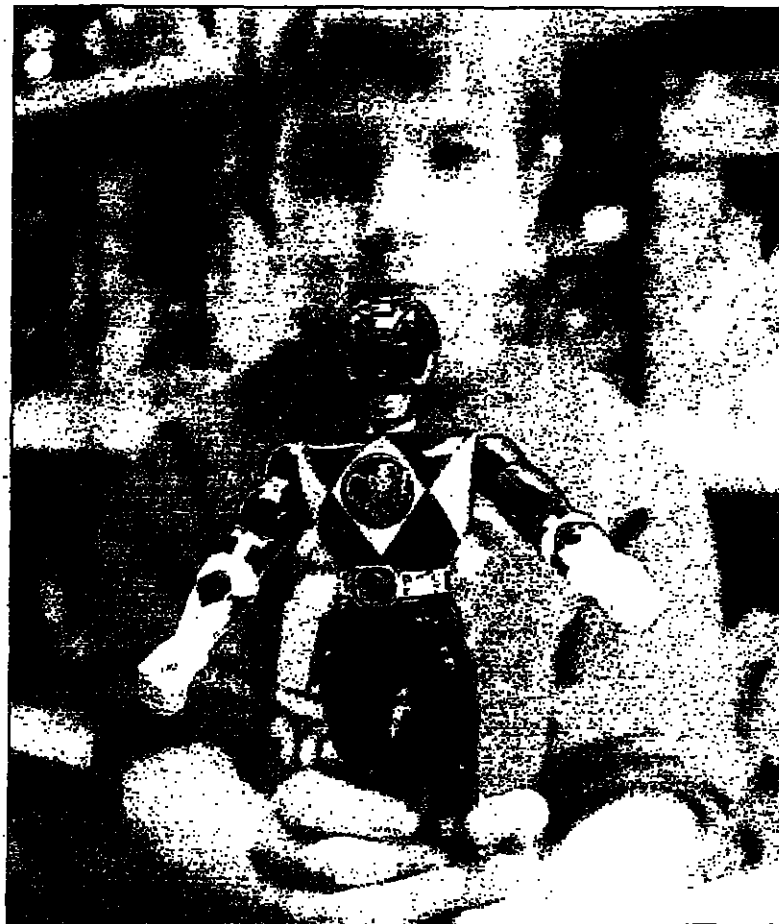
The highest spending area overall is the North West, where

people will spend nearly £50 more than Londoners on gifts and £40 more on food and drink than the Welsh. Those after a good present though should think of moving to the Midlands, where people will fork out £255 on gifts altogether. Londoners will be spending below average—£410—because of higher than average concern about job security.

The peace process appears to be paying dividends, with Ulster voted by retailers as the region most likely to perform better than last year.

Women will spend more on gifts than men and the highest spending group will be 25 to 34-year-olds. Those between 25 and 44 will spend most on toys, with favourites such as Pogs—small laminated discs with holograms—and Action Man.

As for 64-year-olds will spend most on clothes and over-65s will go for food and drink. Parents with children aged be-



Baby doll: Children at Hamley's toy store in London yesterday. Power Rangers (left) and Barbie clearly remain in vogue



Baywatch Barbie for boyfriends

She has long blonde hair, big blue eyes, countless new looks, and is the best selling doll for girls this Christmas. And apparently for boys as well, writes Glenda Cooper.

The success of Baywatch Barbie, the latest incarnation of the blonde plastic bombshell, is due to teenage girls buying the £15 doll for their boyfriends who are fans of the TV series *Baywatch*, according to the British Association of Toy Retailers.

Baywatch Barbie, a lifeguard dressed in a red swimsuit, bears a close resemblance to the show's star Pamela Anderson Lee. Or as a spokesman for the BATR puts it: "You could say Pamela Anderson modelled herself on Barbie. After all Barbie got there first."

"Mums used to be mad on Barbie so they buy them for their daughters," he added. "But according to some of our retailers teenage girls are buying them for their boyfriends who are fans of *Baywatch*. It doesn't surprise me in the least."

tween 5 and 9 will, unsurprisingly, spend more than double the amount on gifts as spent by couples without children.

What they will be spending it on, according to the type, are the latest CD-Rom computer games. Clive Vaughan, retail consultant for analysts Verdict, said that Power Rangers, last year's favourites, were still going strong but the crucial difference to retailers' prospects of success this Christmas was the launch of new games by Sega and Sony "trying to revive the computer games boom of 1993".

Sony's Playstation, a new generation 32-bit system, shifted 50,000 units within five weeks of its launch. It has now sold 85,000 and Sony claims it will sell 130,000 by Christmas—mainly to men in their mid 20s.

Sega, which has dominated the UK market, says that its rival 32-bit Saturn games system has sold about 60,000 and will sell 80 to 85,000 by Christmas "at a conservative estimate". Both are now priced at £299, with games costing between £40 and £50.

But while consumers may know what they want, the *Touche Ross* survey suggests that stores are badly out of step. While retailers believe that out of town, factory outlets and TV home shopping will take a larger share away from the high

street, 60 per cent of consumers are planning to buy their Christmas presents on the high street or at department stores.

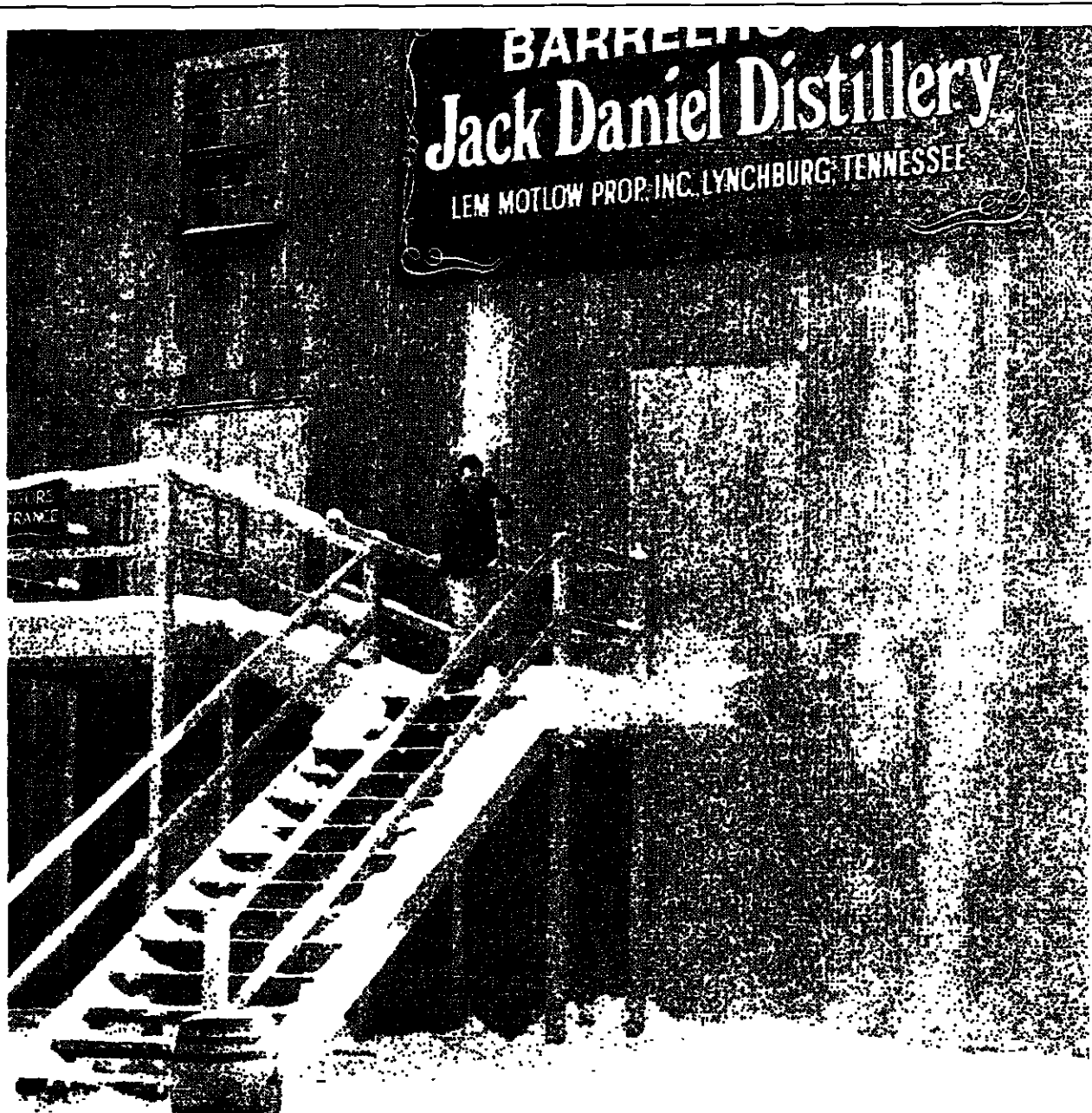
What people look for when shopping also seems to be at variance with those organising it. Customers say they want a larger selection of goods with a convenient location followed by low prices. Retailers think that customers' priorities are customer service, quality and better availability of stock.

Mr Vaughan said it was a worrying time for retailers as consumers left it later and later to do their Christmas shopping.

"Most retailers are holding their breath waiting for something to happen. There's a lot of nervousness that customers do not seem to be spending," he said.

This could well aid the consumer, he added: "There will be some bargains around. The more consumers leave it to the last minute before committing to spend, the more panicky retailers will get and there'll be good pre-Christmas sales."

If you haven't even got as far as making a Christmas list, don't worry. Apparently a third of us leave shopping to the last two weeks and more than one in ten wait until the last possible week.



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news

Gangland killing: Police dismiss links to death of Leah Betts as victims revealed as rising figures in narcotics underworld

Double-cross theory on murder of drug dealers

WILL BENNETT

Three men shot dead in a gangland killing in Essex may have been the victims of a double cross or have been murdered because they owed money, police said yesterday.

Detectives dismissed reports that the killings were being linked to the death of Leah Betts, the teenager who died last month after taking ecstasy, as "pure speculation".

They are concentrating their inquiries on known associates of the three men who are all large-scale drug-dealers in Essex.

Craig Rolfe, 26, from Grays; Patrick Tate, 37, from Basildon; and Anthony Tucker, 38, from Fobbing, were shot dead in a Range Rover in the village of Rettendon, near Chelmsford. Their bodies were found on a lonely track by two men out feeding pheasants on Thursday

morning. It was soon clear it was a gangland execution.

Detective Superintendent Ivan Dibley, who is leading the inquiry, said yesterday: "They had been killed, I suppose, because of a problem with their drug-dealing. There is nothing to suggest that they distributed drugs to Leah Betts."

He agreed they were "whole-sale rather than retail" drugs dealers. "They were dealing at a higher level than the street traders," he said. "There could be a power struggle going on or a double-cross taking place and somebody has sought retribution. It might be that somebody is owed money."

"Because it is quick money and easy money, there is this power struggle among the larger dealers and inevitably there are going to be incidents such as this occurring."

He said that the three men

had been moving up in the drug-dealing world and sold a variety of substances. He did not know whether this included ecstasy. "It may be that the shooting has occurred because higher drug dealers were trying to find a position of power."

Donna Jagers, Rolfe's girlfriend, wept yesterday as she appealed for help catch those responsible for the killings.

Det Supt Dibley said that six or seven shots had been fired at the men from one or more shotguns. Rolfe, the driver, and Tucker, the front seat passenger, had been shot in the head, and Tate, who was in the back, was

blasted in the head and body. He said: "The shooting was done at very close range. You did not need to be an expert to have achieved what was achieved. I still do not know whether the persons who committed these murders travelled

to the scene in that Range Rover or whether they were at the scene before they arrived. It is likely that I am looking for more than one person."

Police investigating the death of Leah Betts yesterday arrested a teenager in connection with supplying the drug.

A 17-year-old youth from Basildon, Essex, was charged with supplying a Class A drug and bailed to appear at Chelmsford magistrates' on 10 January. Leah died after taking the drug at her 18th birthday party at her home in Latchingdon, Essex, on 10 November.

Leah is believed to have bought the ecstasy that killed her from Raquel's nightclub, in Basildon. She fell into a coma after taking the pill and was put on a life support machine. She died four days later. Tests showed that the drug had not been contaminated.



Vehicle of crime: The Range Rover in which the three men died is removed from Rettendon Photograph: Nick Turpin

Speaker accused:
Booth
under
from T
backbe

PHOTO: MAX FORSYTHE

Violent end to a tacky dream

WILL BENNETT

Craig Rolfe, Patrick Tate and Anthony Tucker thought they were taking the fast route to easy money in the soulless towns of south Essex.

The three men were friends and worked as a criminal team in Basildon, Grays and the surrounding areas, and all had numerous previous convictions for various offences.

But these were for traditional crimes such as stealing cars, burglaries and armed robberies. Tate had come out of prison after serving a sentence for the latter only a month before they were shot dead.

All three had ambitions to make more money—and in the underworld today, that means dealing in drugs, with the risk of making dangerous enemies.

Tate knew the risks involved because he had been wounded by a gunman in a murder attempt outside his home just before he went into prison.

Det Supt Ivan Dibley, heading the inquiry into the killing of the three men at Rettendon, near Chelmsford, said: "These men, from previous experience, have been involved in criminality where it is likely that their lives have been threatened."

Tate, 37, had lived with his girlfriend, who is a child-minder, and their 18-month-old son at a bungalow in Basildon. The couple moved in 18 months ago and had spent thousands of pounds renovating it, but his

girlfriend left before he came out of prison.

Sylvia Pearce, a neighbour, said: "They were run neighbours. I'm not surprised something like this should happen. There were always cars drawing up and people visiting at all hours."

Rolfe, 26, from Grays, came from a violent background. According to a police source yesterday his father was convicted of manslaughter in 1978 for an axe attack on his mother from which she later died.

Outwardly he was a devoted family man and had lived with his girlfriend Donna Jagers, 26, for seven years. The couple have a six-year-old daughter.

Tucker, 38, had recently moved to a large house in the village of Fobbing, near Basildon. He was not well known by neighbours, one of whom said: "He looked a tough nut and I kept well away."

The village is full of mock-Tudor windows and bungalows that would not look out of place on the Costa Del Sol. It was the sort of lifestyle to which Tucker aspired.

He got a whiff of that life through his friendship with the boxing champion Nigel Benn, for whom he had acted as a minder at big fights.

To finance such a life, the three started dealing wholesale in drugs. They were murdered in Rolfe's Range Rover in a muddy lane. It was a violent end to a tacky dream.



Blasted to death: Anthony Tucker, left, and Craig Rolfe

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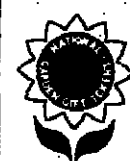
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Speaker accused: Sir Marcus Fox to discuss complaints of bias

Boothroyd under fire from Tory backbench

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

Sir Marcus Fox, chairman of the 1922 committee, is expected to seek an informal meeting with the Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, to discuss complaints by some Tory MPs that she has been high handed in some of her dealings with them.

Ms Boothroyd began a long weekend away yesterday after one of the more turbulent weeks in her five-year tenure of the Speaker's Chair - by all accounts in no mood to be "pushed around" by some of her more strident critics on the Tory backbenches.

A senior Tory backbencher yesterday confirmed in the wake of a meeting of the 1922 executive on Thursday that Sir Marcus was likely to seek a "quiet chat" with the Speaker to discuss the criticisms. A robust Ms Boothroyd effectively challenged her critics on Thursday to put down a motion against her if they wished and promised it would be "debated immediately".

But there were growing signs that party business managers and many Tory MPs are wary of joining a campaign of criticism by a small and vociferous group in the party - among them Alan Duncan, MP for Rutland and Melton, and a parliamentary aide to Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative Party chairman.

And parliamentary supporters of the Speaker - who enjoys a legendary level of popularity by the standards of other politicians in the country at large - strongly refute suggestions that as a former Labour MP she has been biased against the government benches in her rulings. A widely publicised tally of

complaints against the Speaker yesterday included claims that she had been wrong to cut off an intervention by Douglas Hurd, the former Foreign Secretary, that she unnecessarily rebuked Rod Richards, Welsh Under-Secretary for his criticism of Tony Blair for sending his son to a grant-maintained school, and that she refused to condemn alleged "bully boy" tactics by Labour whips against Labour rebels in this week's vote on the Budget resolutions.

But her supporters counter with an equally detailed list of cases in which she has come down on heavily on Labour MPs - pointing out that the only MP she has barred from the Chamber have been non-Tories: Dennis Skinner (Labour, twice); Dale Campbell-Savours (Labour, twice); and Ian Paisley (DUP, once).

They strongly counter claims that she was unfair to Mr Hurd after Michael Howard's statement on asylum on 20 November by reminding him that he should be asking questions rather than making a statement. The suggestion that she showed more indulgence to Sir David Steel on the same day is countered by the argument that Sir David did indeed ask a series of questions in his intervention.

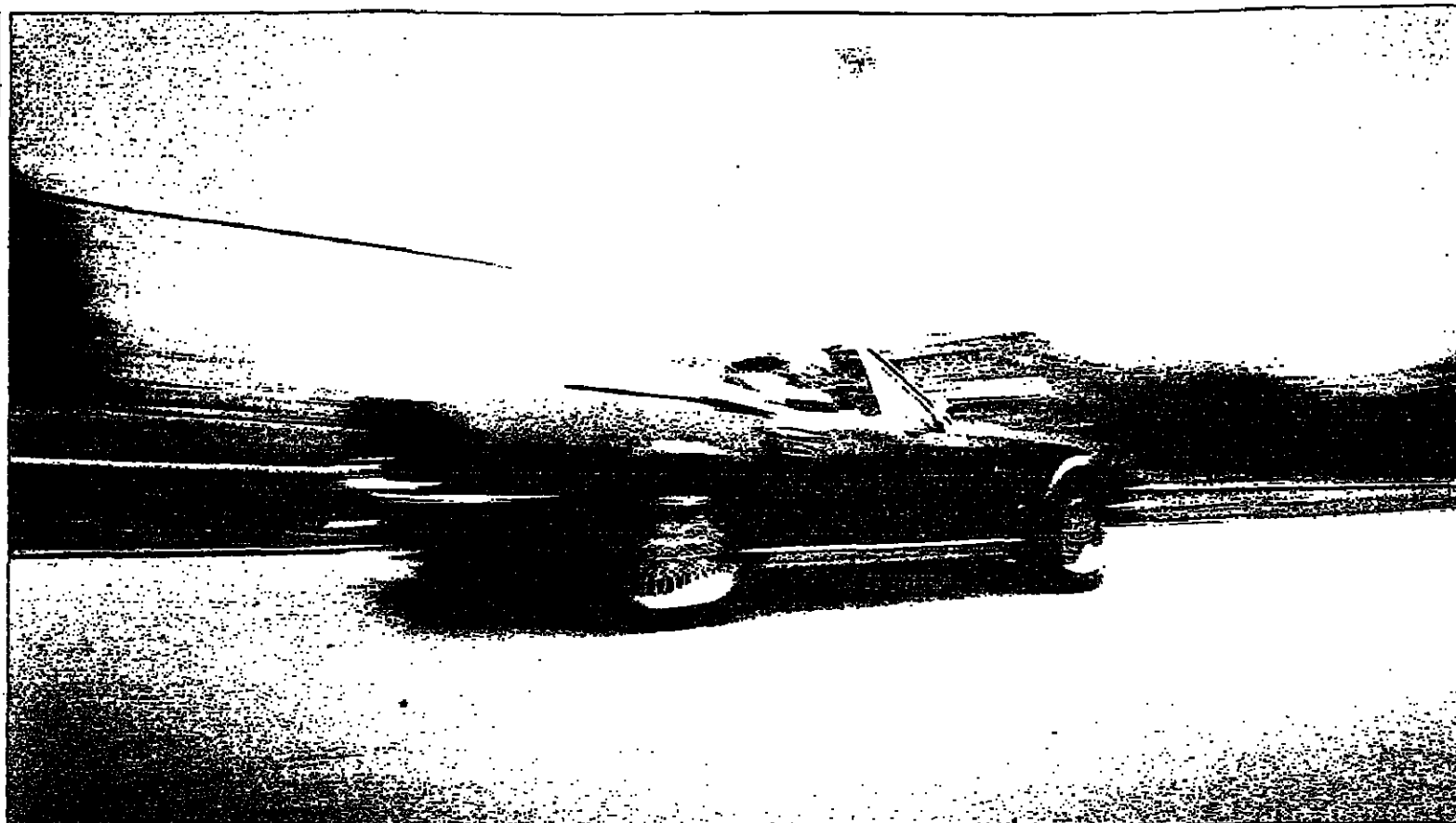
Ms Boothroyd was also abrupt in cutting in on the Labour MP Piers Khabra in the same sitting, interrupting him after only 25 words of an intervention to say: "Order. This is a time for questions." *Hansard* then records the following brisk exchange: Mr Khabra: "I will go on to a question." Ms Boothroyd: "No, we don't go on to questions. We begin with questions."

Recently she has taken a tough line with an intervention by Dennis Skinner in Treasury Questions, and with the Labour backbencher Angela Eagle after a statement on the National Blood Service.

The likely encounter between Sir Marcus and Ms Boothroyd may not be quite the frosty affair some of the Speaker's more active critics would like. The two MPs have known each other since their Yorkshire childhood, went to school together at Eastborough, and even attended Dewsbury's Vivienne School of Dancing at the same time.



Betty Boothroyd: In no mood to be 'pushed around'



A prince's chariot: The 1978 Aston Martin V8 Vantage Volante, which is expected to top £100,000 at auction this month. Photograph: Edward Sykes

The car's the star - by Royal Appointment

JOHN MCKIE

It has one careful owner, 46,000 miles on the clock and will be sold on 11 December. But before any parents get any Christmas present ideas for the first-time driver, they should bear in mind that the car is an

Aston Martin V8 Vantage Volante and that the previous owner is the Prince of Wales. The Prince has donated the Aston Martin, one of only 22 in the world, to a Sotheby's auction, with all proceeds going to the Prince's Charities Trust. The 400-horsepower, 150mph

racing green car was originally completed in 1986 at the Aston Martin headquarters in Buckinghamshire to "the Prince of Wales's specification".

It features extra soundproofing and a jar in which HRH kept sugar lumps to give as treats to his ponies. It is expected to fetch between

£100,000 and £130,000 in the auction of classic cars and motorcycles at the RAE Museum in Hendon, north London, on 9 and 11 December.

The auction also features, what is expected to be the most expensive motorcycle ever sold,

The MV Augusta 5004 was ridden to Grand Prix victory by John Surtees, as well as Gary Hocking, John Hartle and Mike Hailwood, and is one of the most successful machines ever. Sotheby's expect it to realise at least £300,000, more than double the £90,000 world record.

Schools' careers advice 'poor'

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Careers education and guidance is poor in one out of three schools, according to a report from inspectors published yesterday.

A minority of schools is ignoring pupils' interests and trying to persuade them to stay on in the sixth form when they would be better off elsewhere, the report from the Office for Standards in Education says.

It says the need for schools to market themselves because they get money for each sixth-former means some are not offering impartial advice. "In about a quarter of the schools with sixth forms, there were unresolved tensions as to how far students should be encouraged to go and see for themselves what was on offer elsewhere." Those that were open and even-handed about careers advice did not suffer from an exodus of pupils.

The survey, based on 117 school inspections and evidence gathered from a further 72 schools, found students were not given enough information to decide whether they were suited to A-level or advanced vocational courses (GNVOS). *Office for Standards in Education and Guidance in Schools*: HMSO: £3.95.

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news

Judge rejects claim that rail sell-off is unlawful

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

Rail campaigners will go to the Court of Appeal on Monday in a last-ditch attempt to stop the rail privatisation process, after a judge ruled against them in the High Court yesterday.

In a forthright judgment, Mr Justice Macpherson rejected the campaigners' claims that the franchise director, Roger Salmon, had been wrong to set minimum standards of service for private operators which are well below those at present run by British Rail.

The case for judicial review was brought by the anti-privatisation group Save Our Railways, which argued that "Passengers Service Requirements" that set the minimum level of service for operators under the new structure for the privatised railways allowed for substantial cuts in services. The campaigners argued that this was unlawful because Mr Salmon is supposed to have based his requirements on the existing timetable.

The judge, however, accepted the arguments of counsel for the franchise director, who said that the word "based" did not mean "the same as". The judge stressed that the PSRs are not the ultimate timetable. They are supposed to allow a certain amount of flexibility for operators to run commercially profitable services at times and frequencies which they choose.

The judge ruled that he was unable to say that Mr Salmon had acted either "perversely, irrationally or unfairly", which were the only types of behaviour the court was able to declare were unlawful.

Indeed, the judge was critical of Save Our Railways for having brought the case, arguing that "too many cases come to this court which have no place here". He said: "The director and staff have indeed based themselves on current levels of

service. Evidence shows the director used the timetables as a starting point and that was what he was enjoined to do." Consequently, the judge rejected Save Our Railways' application for leave to appeal but the campaigners said they would apply to the Court of Appeal on Monday.

Jimmy Knapp, leader of the RMT rail workers' union, which is part of the Save Our Railways campaign, said: "Privatisation will lead to major cuts in services. We won the transport argument but lost the legal one." Labour's transport spokeswoman, Clare Short, said: "This result is very disappointing for Britain's rail users as it allows the Government and private operators to go ahead and cut rail services after privatisation."

Ms Short said it was notable that the judge emphasised how he did not want to interfere in political decisions, but did not state that the cuts to services were reasonable or desirable.

The failure of the case opens the way for Mr Salmon to announce the winners of the franchises for two of the first three lines on Tuesday, which are likely to be the management buy-out team for the London, Tilbury and Southend line, and Stagecoach for South West Trains. The winning bidder for the third line, Great Western Railway, which is also likely to go to the management buy-out team, will be announced a few days later.

Nick Newton, the assistant franchise director, said: "We will press on with the franchising process. The judge recognised that we are safeguarding vulnerable services, while allowing operators to run commercially profitable services."

Sir George Young, the Secretary of State for Transport, said: "I welcome the decision to allow the franchising director to proceed with the first tranche of franchises and look forward to his announcement of their award soon."

The new evangelism: 'Captain Bible must use Scripture to destroy the Dome of Darkness'



All together now: Followers of Rodney Howard-Browne are carried away on a wave of emotion, while the excitement is clearly too much for some (below) Photograph: Philip Meech



Praying all the way to the bank

ANDREW BROWN
Religious Affairs
Correspondent

"Amen, praise God, hallelujah, make your cheques payable to Revival Ministries International" cries the South African evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne, who has been at Olympia, in London, this week.

He preaches the "health and wealth" doctrines - you give to him and God will give to you - discredited among mainstream evangelicals. But he is credited with being the man who brought the "Toronto Bless-

ing" to Toronto. A wave of excitement has passed from Toronto to more than 2,000 British churches, and is characterised by uncontrollable giggling on the part of the blessed, who consider it a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence.

The blessing is controversial among evangelicals, some of whom believe that God would never make his followers do anything so undignified, but Howard-Browne himself is more controversial still.

Visitors to his show are asked to register, "for security purposes", to weed out demon-

strators and the press. Inside, I was handed a copy of the mail-order catalogue for the Kensington Temple, one of the largest pentecostal churches in Britain, offering fundamentalist computer games - "Help Captain Bible as he gets sent to destroy the Dome of Darkness. Armed with his computer bible, Captain Bible must find his way through seven levels of action adventure and apply Scripture to destroy the forces of deception."

Howard-Browne himself, a burly, vulpine man, moved seamlessly from prayer straight

into the appeal for money. Wastepaper baskets were passed around the crowd as he told stories of his poverty-stricken time in South Africa, when he could only afford a broken-down Mercedes.

He asked those who could not write cheques to give cash. Those with no cash could fill out "pledge forms", promising to send him sums of money later. "My God will liberally supply your every need. If it worked for me, it can work for you."

I could bear no more. I filled out a pledge card in the name of Jenny Rous-Twyte and left.

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Blair rounds on Mawhinney over 'Lie Machine'

JOHN RENTOU
Political Correspondent

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, made an unusually strongly worded attack yesterday on Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative Party chairman, accusing him of running a propaganda "Lie Machine".

After the collapse of three Tory public relations offensives in a week, Mr Blair told a Scottish Labour Party dinner in Glasgow: "The 'Tory Lie Machine' has moved up a gear as the election nears. They will smear, as they always do, and lie and cheat and spend vast sums on untruthful propaganda."

He cited Conservative Central Office's role in using sensitive Home Office information about individual asylum applications, in publishing an open-out ballot at a school in its own constituency against the wishes of the headteacher, and in placing a story which the Lord

Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, was forced to deny.

Donald Dewar, the Opposition chief whip, has written to Mr Mawhinney asking about the role in these cases of Sheila Gunn, the new Tory press officer. Ms Gunn was appointed by Mr Mawhinney, who became chairman in July. Mr Dewar asked: "Are these people merely incompetent, or malicious, or is it simply that they are out of control?"

Mr Blair's speech last night broadened the attack, accusing Mr Mawhinney of "reducing government to an extension of Central Office... It's propaganda first, second and third, the national interest last. Lie about Labour, lie about the past, lie about the future."

He accused Michael Forsyth, Secretary of State for Scotland, of lying about Labour's "torture tax" plan to give a Scottish parliament power to raise or lower income tax by up to 3p

in the pound. "Torture taxes are scare stories. Tory taxes are all too real. Our devolved parliament will not tax anyone unless the people of Scotland vote for it. Nobody voted for 20 new Tory taxes in 1992 but they got them just the same. They lied about their tax plans then. They are lying about our tax plans now," he said.

Mr Forsyth fought back yesterday, saying Mr Blair had no credibility with his "pathetic assertion that he would create a power to raise a torture tax but that it might not be used and that we must await a manifesto to find out".

Mr Blair also linked Mr Mawhinney to Tory complaints that Betty Boothroyd, the Speaker of the Commons, was biased towards Labour. Alan Duncan (C, Rutland), Mr Mawhinney's parliamentary private secretary, was reported to be keeping a record of incidents of alleged bias.

Labour soothes business fears over tax

JOHN ARLIDGE
Scotland Correspondent

Tony Blair moved to tackle economic fears over Labour's plans for constitutional reform yesterday when he told Scottish business leaders that he had "no plans" to increase income tax north of the border.

The Labour leader reaffirmed his commitment to legislate for a Scottish parliament with revenue-raising powers in the first year of government. But he dismissed as "lies" Tory claims that the parliament would impose a "torture tax".

"The Labour Party has no plans to raise tax whether in Scotland or elsewhere," he said.

Addressing 500 senior businessmen and women in Edinburgh, Mr Blair said Labour's proposed parliament would have the power to raise income tax north of the border by up to 3 pence in the pound. It would be up to the Scottish Labour Party to draw up Labour's manifesto for elections to the new body but, he went on, the party as a whole had no plans to increase tax rates.

George Robertson, Labour's spokesman on Scottish affairs, who leads the Scottish party, strongly hinted that he would oppose tax-raising policies. "Any decision on tax would be taken with great prudence and care. It may be that we decide



Business matters: Tony Blair, Labour's leader, after addressing the CBI in Edinburgh yesterday. Photograph: Colin McPherson

to live within the existing assigned budgets," he said.

Mr Blair's comments came after some of Scotland's leading employers - including Scottish and Newcastle, the brewing and leisure giant, and Weir Group engineers - called on

Labour to abandon its devolution plans. Many industrialists fear that Labour politicians would use the proposed parliament's tax-raising powers, forcing up wage demands, fuelling inflation and discouraging inward investment.

Mr Blair insisted that their fears were unfounded. He was determined to initiate an "informed debate" on devolution. The more the policy was discussed, the more business would realise that it represented an "opportunity and not a threat".

A parliament would bring business closer to the country's decision-makers, he said, pledging that a Scottish parliament would not be able to change the business climate by varying corporation tax, or changing any regulatory regime in any sector.

Spin doctor at heart of 'risky' PR campaign

"Sheila Gunn takes risks she shouldn't take, but the responsibility lies with Brian Mawhinney," was the judgement of one observer yesterday, writes John Rentoul.

She is well-liked among Westminster journalists, having been one herself until she was appointed senior press officer at Conservative Central Office at the beginning of last month. But she has appeared too eager to carry out the Tory chairman's ruthless campaign to match Labour's slick public relations.

A secretary on the Times news desk in the 1970s, she became a parliamentary reporter, editor of the Times Diary and then a political correspondent.

She shot to fame as the third of five girlfriends of Steven Norris, the transport minister, when the amorous adventures of the 50-year-old former car dealer, who is separated from his wife, were revealed in the tabloid press.

On her arrival at Central Office, she immediately made a difference. For a year, Tory press officers had been heavily outnumbered by their Labour rivals who regularly toured the newspaper offices behind the Commons press gallery. From her first day, Miss Gunn was a regular presence.

But the Tories' problem of pushing poorly checked stories did not improve. Just this week, three stories emanating from Central Office have blown up in the Tories' faces.

On Tuesday, Miss Gunn's use of Home Office information became the subject of a front-page story in the Guardian, which claimed she had given journalists confidential information about the case of a Nigerian seeking asylum, Abiodun Igbidun, who has been in detention since June.

Doug Henderson, Labour's immigration spokesman, accused Central Office of using underhand tactics to get the Asylum and Immigration Bill through the Commons. "It is outrageous and probably a foretaste of what they are going to

do on the Bill. Their aim is to stir up public pressure by using certain information to continually put cases before the public," he said.

Tory Central Office also promoted the complaints of the headteacher of a school in Tony Blair's constituency, who said local Labour activists had "intimidated and misled" parents in the ballot to convert to grant-maintained status which the headteacher lost this week. The story first appeared in the Sunday Express on 26 November and was then used in the Commons to try to embarrass the Labour leader by Sir Fergus Montgomery (C, Altrincham and Sale) and Tim Devlin (C, Stockton S). It was the front-page lead in Wednesday's Daily Telegraph.

Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, then ordered an investigation into the claims, and her department's press release was faxed out by Tory Central Office. But by then the head had decided he did not want any further action taken. He said: "Tony Blair is an honourable man. He is nothing to do with it. I will be voting for him at the next election. It's wrong for the Tories to drag him into it."

On Thursday came the worst mishap so far. A front-page story, again in the Telegraph, reported a speech to be given that night by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, warning the judges "not to overstep their powers" by interfering in political decisions.

That afternoon Lord Mackay issued an unprecedented denial insisting not only that he was not giving a speech that night but that he did not hold the views attributed to him. It quickly emerged that the Telegraph story was written on the basis of a briefing by Miss Gunn, who in turn was quoting from a draft of a speech which had circulated among Cabinet ministers. (The assumption was that Mr Mawhinney had decided this would be a good story and asked Miss Gunn to put it out with some "top-spin" on it.

Tory blames judges for rising crime

JOHN RENTOU

A right-wing Conservative MP blamed "liberal, socialist-minded judges and magistrates" for rising crime levels yesterday and called for the return of national service and the birch.

David Evans, MP for Welwyn and Hatfield and John Redwood's campaign manager in this year's Tory leadership election, complained that some of the judiciary was suffering from "mad judge disease".

He also suggested, in a debate on crime, that judges should be paid a percentage of the fines they imposed to encourage them to give sentences "that fit the crime". He demanded the castration of rapists. And he said it might be a good idea to double the £10 Christmas bonus for pensioners if they protected their property by shooting burglars.

Mr Evans said prison worked in deterring criminals. "One more scumbag behind bars is one less rampaging around the streets."

He called for measures to tackle "pathetic parents" who cannot control their children. If fines against the parents did not work "we could put them behind bars with their children."

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Hospitals face casualty attack

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
and PATRICK BUTLER

Fierce criticism of hospital accident and emergency departments, in the face of mounting pressures and growing staff shortages, is on the way from the Audit Commission.

A leak to the *Health Service Journal* of the commission's draft report on NHS casualty departments shows that most are having difficulty in attracting enough doctors of all ranks, from consultants to juniors.

Meanwhile, swift emergency admission is proving more difficult to achieve at many hospitals. An increasing proportion of patients in many A & E departments are acutely ill, but many are treated by unsupervised and inexperienced doctors.

If the number of emergency admissions continues to rise, log-jams of patients blocking cubicles and spilling into corridors

will become an increasing problem, affecting not only the speed with which patients are seen, but their quality of care, the draft report says.

It recommends a complex series of measures, including training nurses to handle less serious cases and using a wider range of skills, from suturing wounds and applying plaster of Paris to defibrillating patients after heart attacks.

The study also criticises the Patient's Charter standard that patients must be assessed within five minutes of arrival. With few exceptions, the commission found, those units that had the best rating for assessing patients quickly were in fact the slowest for actually treating and discharging them.

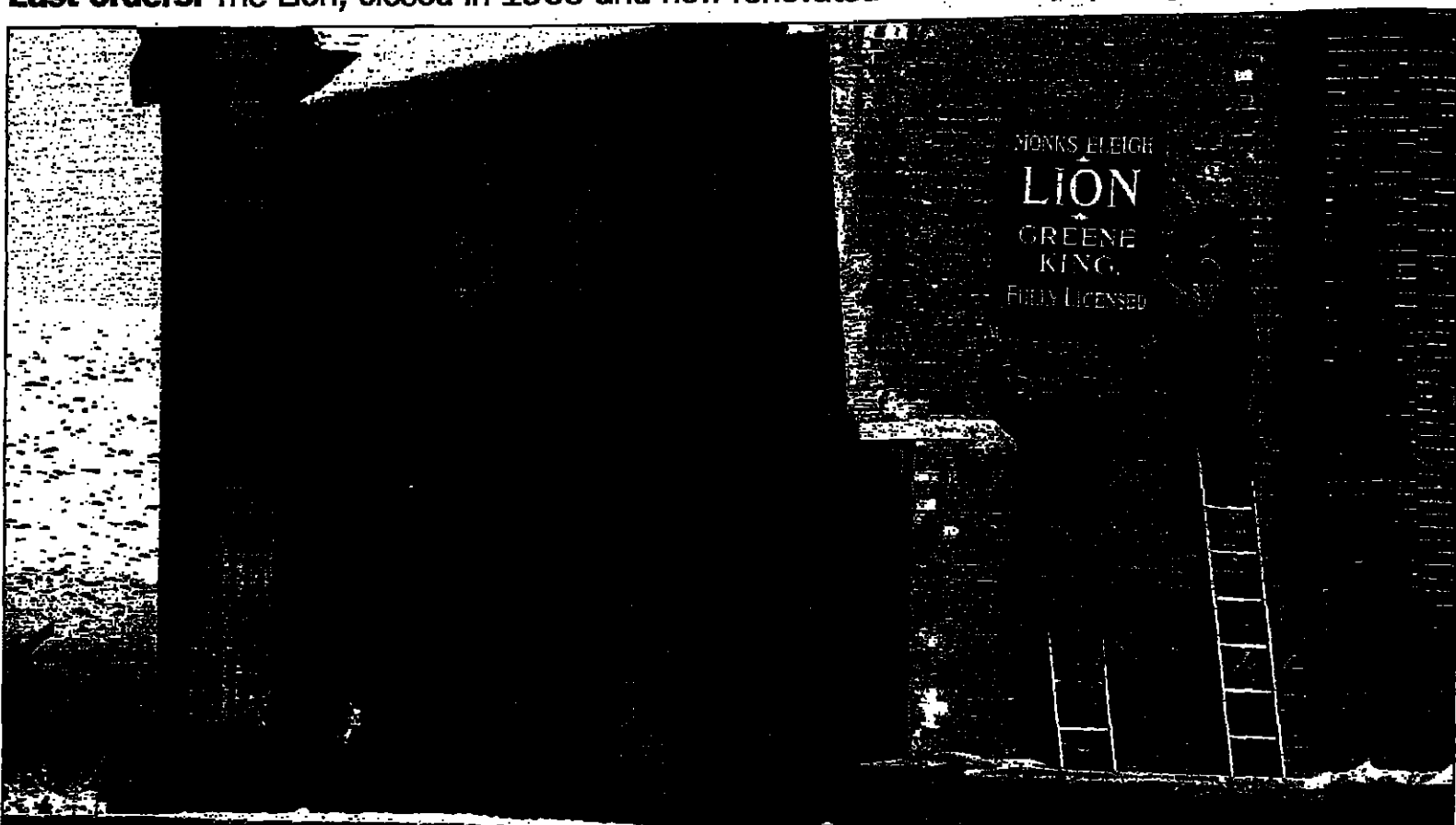
The draft, due for revision and publication next year, says that the charter has forced changes in the way the departments operate which have

not always been to the patient's advantage.

Widespread variations were found in the time it took patients to be treated in the 220 A & E departments in England and Wales. At one, 95 per cent of patients were seen by a doctor within one hour, at another, only 32 per cent.

The number of consultant accident specialists has doubled in the past 15 years, but while some hospitals have three consultants, others have only one. Shorter junior doctor hours, more telescoped training, the removal of the requirement that all trainee surgeons must do a spell in casualty, and competition from other specialities meant that half of hospitals had too few doctors. A rise of a quarter in junior grades and 43 per cent in middle grade doctors is needed to meet staffing needs. That is unlikely to happen, the commission believes.

Last orders: The Lion, closed in 1965 and now renovated as a home, opens just one more time



Times past: Carol Hibberd watches John Ratcliffe, right, and a workman adjust the sign at The Lion, Monks Eleigh, yesterday. Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

Pub-for-a-day family pulls pints for locals

CLARE GARNER

It's open house but not on the house at The Lion, in Monks Eleigh, Suffolk, today. For the owners have decided to re-open the pub that has been closed since 1965 for just one day before moving into what is to be their family home.

Customers will be drinking bitter at £1.50 not 9p a pint, but beyond such inevitable inconsistencies, John Ratcliffe and his wife, Carol Hibberd, 39, have done their best to recreate the atmosphere of yesteryear.

Mr Ratcliffe, 38, a joiner, has built a bar and planted some pub pews in the room which was once the saloon but is now their sitting-room. Other props include the original pub sign, a darts board, two log fires, and a live folk band for the evening. But this local will not last long. Come 11pm, orders will be the very last.

"It's nice to entertain the idea of running a pub, but personally the practicalities don't appeal. I like going to pubs but I also like to come home at the end of the night," Mr Ratcliffe, who has been granted a 12-hour "occasional" licence, said.

"It was a pub until 1965 and hasn't been lived in since 1968; so really people remember it last as a pub. It seemed appropriate to give it another chance to live as a pub. Apart from that, it's an excuse for a party and gives people in the village who have seen the renovation work going on over the last couple of years a chance to come and have a look in the house."

One villager who intends to drop in for a drink is Arthur Mayes, 76, a retired farm worker. "I've been around in the village all my life. I drank in The

Lion in 1942. It was a big, decent pub with a social club upstairs," he said.

"We used to go round all the pubs in the village, going from one to the next. We used to have a sing-song but there is none of that now. All there is here is disco—a lot of rubbish. Most of the people who used to go there will probably be dead now, but I will be going down there."

When the family bought the Grade II listed building two years ago it was "a bit of an eyesore". Now it is a six-bedroom home for the couple, and their four children, Ashley, 13, Melanie, 11, Tom, 5, and Lucy, 2.

At one time there were four pubs in Monks Eleigh, of which only The Bull and The Swan survive. "In 1965 a huge rambling pub was seen as a liability by a brewer, but now The Lion, with its river frontage and acre and a half of land would be seen as an asset," Mr Ratcliffe said.

Pub of the Year

The Lion, Monks Eleigh, Suffolk, has been named 'Pub of the Year' by the National Pub Association. The award is given to the best pub in the country, judged on the basis of its architecture, atmosphere, service and food. The Lion has been awarded the title for the second year running. It was also named 'Pub of the Year' in 1994. The award was presented to Mr Ratcliffe at a ceremony in London. The Lion is a Grade II listed building and is one of the best preserved pubs in the country. It has a rich history and is a popular destination for visitors to the area. The pub is owned by the Ratcliffe family and is run by John and Carol. It is a family-run pub and is known for its friendly atmosphere and excellent service. The pub is a popular destination for visitors to the area and is a great place to enjoy a pint and a chat with the locals.

Milky Bar Kid spared custody

A 15-year-old arsonist who caused £500,000 of damage on an industrial estate was given a "rare opportunity" and placed on a £1,000-a-day youth programme at the Old Bailey today — instead of being given a term in custody.

The fire at Walthamstow, east London, resulted in enormous damage and job loss which was "due to your foolish and mischievous conduct", the Recorder of London, Sir Lawrence Verney, told the teenager, who is just over 4ft tall and bespectacled with red hair, and appeared in court wearing an anorak.

The judge went on: "I think you are sorry for what you did, but I want to make it clear that in the ordinary course the appropriate sentence would be custody for a substantial period."

"An alternative has been put before the court which I believe it ought to adopt. It is a rare opportunity which will help you not only in relation to this matter, but for the rest of your life."

The judge made a two-year supervision order after being told by the court youth worker Alan Doherty that the youngster did not have the stature or emotion to be able to cope with being locked in an institution.

"He acts like a 10- to 12-year-old and could not cope with the

bullying," Mr Doherty said. "He is a small young man who would find it physically and emotionally impossible to cope. He does not have the resources."

Mr Doherty said the scheme the boy would start as part of his supervision order was expensive, but would help his social development, boost his self-esteem and give him projects and practical work.

The teenager, who cannot be named for legal reasons, had admitted arson.

The boy — dubbed The Milky Bar Kid by outsiders because of his size — had set fire to some waste material in a stairwell of a clothing company on the industrial estate, and the blaze had spread rapidly, burning down other units on the site, John Ryder, prosecuting, had told the court.

Hundreds of people were forced to flee. Some found their exit impeded, and one man broke his leg when he had to jump from the first floor.

A consultant psychiatrist who examined the boy said she did not think it was his intention to burn down property or endanger life. He had not realised what his actions would cause.

The teenager suffered a growth deficiency and had been bullied and intimidated in the past because of his height, the court was told.

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صوتنا من الامم

Planning battle: High Court told demolition order was flouted and council officer was fooled when home was grassed over

Farmer jailed for hiding house under ground

Trevor Sedgbeer, who buried his house under a mound of earth in an attempt to circumvent planning officers, was jailed for three months at the High Court in London yesterday for contempt of a court order to demolish it.

Mr Sedgbeer insisted that by removing the roof and top storey of the house at Stoke Gabriel, near Totnes in Devon, he had complied with an order to reduce it to the original ground level.

But Mr Justice Sedgbeer said that the farmer had been shown considerable indulgence by the courts and South Hams District Council, and "The time has now come... for me to commit him to prison for three months."

Mr Sedgbeer, 47, said: "I don't regret what I did. It just shows what I have said all along - the courts are always on the side of the council. They seem to get away with whatever they like, which is all wrong."

He said he and his wife, Loretta, had spent more than £2,000 fighting to overturn the council's refusal of planning permission and said he would be appealing against the jail sentence.

Mr Sedgbeer said that the house was at present a "kennel for the dogs". He and his family were living in Paignton.

Geoffrey Stephenson, counsel for the local authority, had told the judge that in January 1990 the council issued an enforcement notice requiring removal of the building to ground level because it was built without consent. Back-dated consent was refused and in January 1993 Mr Sedgbeer was fined £300 for breach of the enforcement notice.

His continued refusal to pull down the house led to a series of High Court hearings at which he was given more time to demolish, culminating on 21 April this year in a three-month jail order, suspended as long as he got rid of the building by 8 May.

On 9 May, a council enforcement officer, Michael Huxtable, visited the site and found a mound of earth and salvage materials, but no sign of the house. He was convinced the house had been demolished, and reported so to the council.

However, in October he revisited the site and discovered that the mound of earth covered the ground floor of the house.

"Mr Sedgbeer had simply knocked off the top storey, left it as a bungalow, put soil on top and grassed it over," Mr Stephenson said.

He accused Mr Sedgbeer of "overt defiance" of the planning system, the local authority and court orders. "He engaged upon a deliberate deception of the council and the court... His contempt is obvious in both the legal sense and in the everyday meaning of the word."

In a written statement, Mr Sedgbeer said he and his wife had owned the land for 22 years and lived on it for many years, with permission, in a mobile home. The house was originally a cow barn, he said, adding that three other barns in the locality had been given consent for conversion.



Trouble spot: Trevor Sedgbeer with the home he reduced to ground level, instead of pulling it down as the council demanded. Photograph: Ian Jackson

Sainsbury's are Supermarket Wine Merchant of the Year again.

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Roof over their heads: The original two-storey barn conversion

Royal Mint to issue two-tone £2 coin in 1997

A Continental-style two-tone £2 coin is on the way - and the unpopular 50p piece is to lose weight and get a facelift, it was announced yesterday.

The final design has not yet been decided, but the £2 coin will be two-tone, with a white centre. It will be bigger and heavier than the £1 coin, but will not weigh as much as two £1 coins together.

The new 50p piece will be a smaller and lighter version of the existing seven-sided coin introduced in 1969. The modifications will bring the 50p coin into line with the present 5p and 10p pieces, both of which have been made smaller and lighter in recent years.

The Royal Mint would issue the new coins towards the end of 1997, the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, announced in a Commons written reply yesterday.

Commemorative £2 coins have already been minted to mark various occasions, including the 50th anniversary this year of the end of the Second World War. But the new coin will be the first new denomination to go into general circulation since 1983. It will bear the Queen's head on the front, while the design for the reverse will be selected by the Royal Mint Advisory Committee, which is headed by the Duke of Edinburgh.

The decision to introduce the new coins follows a lengthy consultation exercise on the future of the UK's small change involving the public and 1,000 different organisations, including banks, the retailing and vending industries, the blind and the elderly.

A spokeswoman for the Royal Mint said: "Broadly speaking people were happy to see the 50p reduced in size because it's quite a big coin. It does not fit in with existing coins any more."

"Generally speaking there's been a favourable reaction towards the smaller 50p coin and the £2 one, although there are bound to be objections."

A £2 coin was favoured above a note because of its durability and cost. "A note of that value was not considered appropriate because it would be expensive. They do not last as long as coins," the spokeswoman said.



Small change: The white-centred £2 coin - the first new denomination since 1983 - and the updated, lighter 50p coin

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Cultural heritage: Sir David Puttnam at the forefront of successful campaign to protect old cinema from 'tacky' development



Cinematic vision: The Rialto Cinema, in Piccadilly, London, may yet have a future, if development cash is forthcoming



Thwarted: The supermodels (from left) Claudia Schiffer, Elle MacPherson, Naomi Campbell and Christy Turlington

Celebration at reprieve for Rialto

VICKY WARD

The film producer Sir David Puttnam rejoiced yesterday that the Rialto cinema, a Grade II listed cinema, built in 1913 in Piccadilly, central London, had been spared the "tacky" interior design planned by the supermodels Naomi Campbell, Claudia Schiffer, Elle MacPherson and Christy Turlington.

"I am just delighted that there is a chance that it can still be used as a cinema," he said. "I am very attached to it because

my very first film, *Melody*, was premiered there in 1970. I hope that somebody like Channel 4, which is now a distributor, can come in and use it."

Sir David had first lent his support to the campaign to preserve the Rialto as a cinema during the summer, when the supermodels who founded New York's Fashion Café decided it would be the perfect spot for a glitzy London version.

They made a £15m bid to buy the premises, owned by the soft porn-to-property tycoon

Paul Raymond, and applied to Westminster City Council for planning permission. They were to get a decision in October. However, the opposition of Sir David, Lord Attenborough and the Rialto Trust persuaded the council to postpone its verdict.

Initially the council was sceptical about the Rialto Trust's assertions that the cinema - which has one screen and a few hundred seats - could be financially viable as a cinema again. However, the supermodels' renovation plans had to be amended

to comply with English Heritage rules for listed buildings.

The installation of a huge camera lens in the foyer for people to walk through, was deemed completely unsuitable in terms of structure. "The debatable tackiness of the idea was never an issue," a spokesman said firmly.

But by this week the planning committee's attitude had swung behind the objectors. "We felt that the use of the building must remain for entertainment," the spokesman added.

Howard to investigate refugee 'complaints'

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

The Home Office is investigating formal complaints about the treatment by immigration officials of a young asylum seeker, who arrived in the UK complaining of severe pain from multiple rape injuries.

Her lawyers claim the woman was never offered medical treatment and her case was not properly investigated. Had she not gone into hiding, she could have been returned to Zaire, where her husband, arrested by the same soldiers who attacked her, is still missing.

News of the inquiry came as MPs and refugee groups were yesterday made a successful appeal to Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, not to go ahead with the weekend deportation of an East African woman, whose doctors support her claim also to have been raped by soldiers.

The Zairean woman fled her country after she was subjected to gang rape by soldiers, and was forced to watch helplessly as they shot dead her two brothers-in-law who had tried to intervene. The soldiers, members of the President's regiment, beat her family before taking away her husband.

After a tortuous journey arranged by her employer, the woman, Mrs X - still too frightened to be named - arrived in the UK two weeks later and claimed asylum. Although she complained of pain as a result of rape, she alleges she was not referred to a doctor during either of her two interviews with immigration officials.

When her asylum plea was rejected she turned to the Immigration Appeals Adjudicator,

who urged the Home Secretary to allow her entry "outside the rules". She was, said the adjudicator, "an honest young woman who has suffered and witnessed appalling brutality".

But, although her grim story was believed, it was thought that the raid on her home was isolated and carried out in revenge for an attack on soldiers the previous night. She was, the Home Secretary decided, at no more risk than other Zaireans and her deportation was set for 2 March 1994.

It was at this point that Mrs X went underground. She found new lawyers, who, armed with further details of her husband's role in the opposition Union for Democracy and Social Progress party, finally persuaded the Home Secretary to change his mind, and grant her exceptional leave to remain.

Mrs X, who now lives in a women's refuge, said yesterday that she had "felt like a criminal" living in hiding.

Immigration and asylum lawyers and refugee groups say that her case is illustrative of the hard line now being taken, and claim that the new Asylum and Immigration Bill, due for its second reading on Monday, places even greater obstacles in front of refugees. Plans to introduce a list of supposedly safe countries, and to shorten proceedings, mean that those like Mrs X may be wrongly turned away.

Doug Henderson, Labour's immigration spokesman, said: "There will be more and more cases like this - and more and more who gain access to lawyers resorting to judicial review."

The Home Office has not responded to requests for a response to the woman's allegations.

Mystery woman jailed for arsenal

A "frightened" woman, who refused to reveal her age, name and nationality, was jailed for two and a half years yesterday for possessing guns and ammunition.

Known to speak German and believed to be in her thirties, she refused to co-operate with the court and spent most of last month's three-day hearing in the cells.

The jury at Knightsbridge Crown Court, west London, rejected her not-guilty plea and convicted her of possessing two self-loading pistols with silencers, 97 blank bullets, eight rounds of teargas, four flares and a police radio scanner.

The court heard how a German-registered Opel Vectra car, hired in Berlin and found illegally parked in Soho, central London, in June was towed to a Paddington car pound. Later that day she turned up to collect the car. She offered what she claimed was a solid gold coin for payment, but when that was rejected she jumped into the car

and tried to drive off. However, pound staff blocked her exit, forcing her to make off on foot.

A few days later a holdall was spotted inside the car with a gun barrel sticking out of it, and when the woman returned she was arrested.

She denied the car was anything to do with her, and insisted an international driving licence in the name of Michelle Ilic, which was found in the vehicle, was not hers. She also told the court she was not the Michelle Ilic who, on the day of her arrest, was given a conditional discharge at Marlborough Street magistrates for theft.

Owen Davies, defending, said: "She has been so put in fear by other people involved that she cannot say anything about the circumstances in which she had the weapons."

Passing sentence, Judge Christopher Horden said: "I can only conclude that she was in charge of those weapons for a criminal purpose of others."

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صيانة الأجهزة

Major says Bosnia peace must not fail

MICHAEL SHERIDAN
Diplomatic Editor
ADRIAN BRIDGE
Budapest

John Major called on the international community yesterday to take the tough decisions needed to make it "unthinkable" for anyone to drag Bosnia back into the abyss of war.

Opening a two-day Peace Implementation Conference in London, attended by more than 50 countries and organisations, the Prime Minister said people all over Europe were watching their deliberations.

He told the warring parties, whose foreign ministers were

also present, that a 60,000-strong Nato force and a huge international aid effort stood ready to help them entrench the peace settlement next year.

"Many of the faces I see around this table I saw around this table five months ago," Mr Major said. "We met then against a sombre and menacing background." Mr Major was referring to the last London Conference in July, which marked the turning point in Western resolve to use air power against the Bosnian Serbs.

Mr Major said the conference had to take the decision that the "very hard won" and "fragile" peace in Bosnia would not fail.

The conference is intended to put into practice the accord reached in Dayton, Ohio, last month under which Serbs, Muslims and Croats agreed to end the fighting in Bosnia. The accord will be formalised at a ceremony in Paris next week.

The ministers were expected to agree on the nomination of the former Swedish prime minister, Carl Bildt, to the post of High Representative to oversee the political and civilian reconstruction effort.

Behind the scenes, however, an unedifying squabble was in progress over the allocation of high-profile jobs and political authority in the year ahead.

France and the United States are in dispute about the choice of the head of the mission to supervise elections in Bosnia under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). France and other EU states are unhappy about the choice of an American diplomat, Robert Frowick, and want a European to get the post.

There is also a lower-key disagreement between Washington and Paris over the safeguards available to the Serb population of those suburbs of Sarajevo which are due to pass into the hands of the Muslim-led government.

Britain believes the urgent necessity is to organise the deployment and command of the 20,000 US troops who will join British and French units to form the backbone of the Implementation Force (I-For).

After the experience of tangled lines of authority in the ill-fated United Nations mission, all key governments are determined to keep the command structure clear.

Yesterday also saw the effective burial of the International Conference on former Yugoslavia, which operated from the UN headquarters in Geneva. The UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-

Ghali, was on hand to preserve a facade of dignity at the proceedings but he and his officials will play no further part in the politics of the year ahead.

There was extensive back-stage negotiation in London yesterday over the future of Eastern Slavonia, the last region of Croatia still controlled by separatist Serbs. The Serbs are due to hand over to control to an international authority and yield sovereignty to Croatia after two years. But details of the agreement remain in dispute and the region remains a potential cause of a new war.

Many ministers at the conference had flown in from an

OSCE meeting in Budapest, where the row about Mr Frowick emerged. Foreign ministers of the 53 participating countries agreed to assume responsibility for overseeing and monitoring elections, monitoring human rights and drawing up arms control agreements.

The OSCE role, which was outlined in the peace accord in Dayton, Ohio, marks a leap forward for the organisation, which grew out of the East-West forum that brokered the 1975 Helsinki Act. It includes the US and Russia. With only a small secretariat in Vienna, OSCE members admit they view the coming challenge with trepidation.



CHILDREN OF WAR APPEAL

The 'Independent's Christmas appeal for the children of the former Yugoslavia has now raised £52,698.70. We are asking readers to support four charities which are working to help child victims of the war in the Balkans:

Child Advocacy International aims to bring up to 100 sick children to Britain for treatment that they could not obtain at home; Save the Children is helping children who have been separated from their families, counselling and reuniting them; The Red Cross is looking after refugee camps and is linking people through its messaging network; War Child plans to build a £2.5m music therapy centre in Mostar, and to send urgently-needed prosthetics to wounded children.

Please make your cheques or postal orders payable to the charity of your choice and send them to us with the completed coupon.

Srebrenica widows dream of revenge

EMMA DALY
Vozuca, near Tuzla

Bitter tears fuel the misery of life in "new Srebrenica", a straggling village where a thousand women and children mourn the men they lost in the savage Serb assault on old Srebrenica, and nourish the seeds of hatred and revenge.

Vozuca was taken from the Serbs in September and more than 1,200 refugees from Srebrenica are housed in what was once the Serb half of the village. There is some reconstruction, but no running water, electricity or humanitarian aid. The refugees want to return home, but the chances are they will remain in Vozuca, despite the promise in the Dayton peace deal of the right of return.

"If our men came home, we could live here, at least for a while," said Huriya Gabelic. Her new housemates, Mina Ibrahimovic and Ajsa Melmedovic, agreed. But their men will not come home. The murder of thousands of people after the fall of Srebrenica in July led, in the end, to the Dayton peace talks, but that is little consolation to Mrs Gabelic.

"We don't have anyone to go back to. I have lost three men, my two sons and my husband. I just have one daughter left. They tried to escape through the forests and they just disappeared," Mrs Ibrahimovic said, weeping. While the women are filled with distress, their teenaged children ignore the scene and chat amongst themselves, blank because of the horrors they endured. "I also lost four nephews, my father and my uncle - 45 of my relatives."

Mrs Gabelic is, in all likelihood, another Srebrenica widow. "My mother stayed in the house because she was too old to leave," she said. "My husband was captured by the Serbs in Potocari and they took him away from me - he was 51. We just don't know what happened. I heard he was put in front of a firing squad but I'm not sure, it was just gossip."

The scale of the butchery in Srebrenica is unimaginable. Each refugee has a horror story, most centred around the Dutch UN base at Potocari, where Muslims fled for protection from the Serb assault. Witnesses say the Dutch, expecting Nato air strikes to

defend the pocket, ordered the Bosnian army to pull back to safety. It did, but the French UN commander vetoed air raids, and the Serbs rolled in to the gates of the UN camp. About 8,000 people are still missing.

"We went to the UN headquarters in Potocari. It was so full, so many people. Unprofor invited us in to hide. We expected some protection," said Huso Tusunovic, 62, another new resident of Vozuca. Instead, thousands of terrified Bosnians saw their nemesis - General Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb commander.

"Instead of protecting us, they just sold us," Mr Tusunovic said bitterly. "I wish we were in a position to kill all Unprofor, because we sacrificed 100 Muslims for each UN soldier [allowed by General Mladic to leave Srebrenica after the fall]."

The thirst for vengeance is unusual among Bosnians on the government side. Few readily express such sentiments, and they are a testament to Srebrenica's sense of betrayal.

"I'm willing to fight to go back," said Dzamal Gabelic, a young soldier who walked out and reached safety 12 days



Bitter memories: Esme Halilovic, a refugee from Srebrenica, outside her new home in Vozuca

Photograph: AP

later. "I'm not tired of war. I want to fight for my town." His mother nodded: "Everyone is ready to continue fighting because we all lost someone."

The mayor of Srebrenica, Fahrudin Salkovic, now lives in Tuzla. "There is such rebellion and hatred in the minds of people from Srebrenica. It is difficult to wipe that out and get them to forget. No family survived unscathed," he said. "Realistically it will be difficult to go back, but that idea will never leave them."

Mrs Gabelic has had no news of her mother, left behind in a village near Srebrenica. "We just had to run, we had no time to

shut the door of the house. I had just begun to make bread and I just left it. My mother was in bed. We had no time to say good-bye," she cried.

The three families sharing the house live now on bread and a few tins of food: the fields are blanketed by snow and peppered with mines, there is no

work and the women cannot even afford the bus fare to Tuzla to seek news of their men.

Dzamal has installed a water-wheel in the river, to run a light bulb and a car radio that plays Bosnian folk music. "In Srebrenica every family had a water-wheel," Mrs Ibrahimovic said wistfully.

INDEPENDENT CHILDREN OF WAR APPEAL

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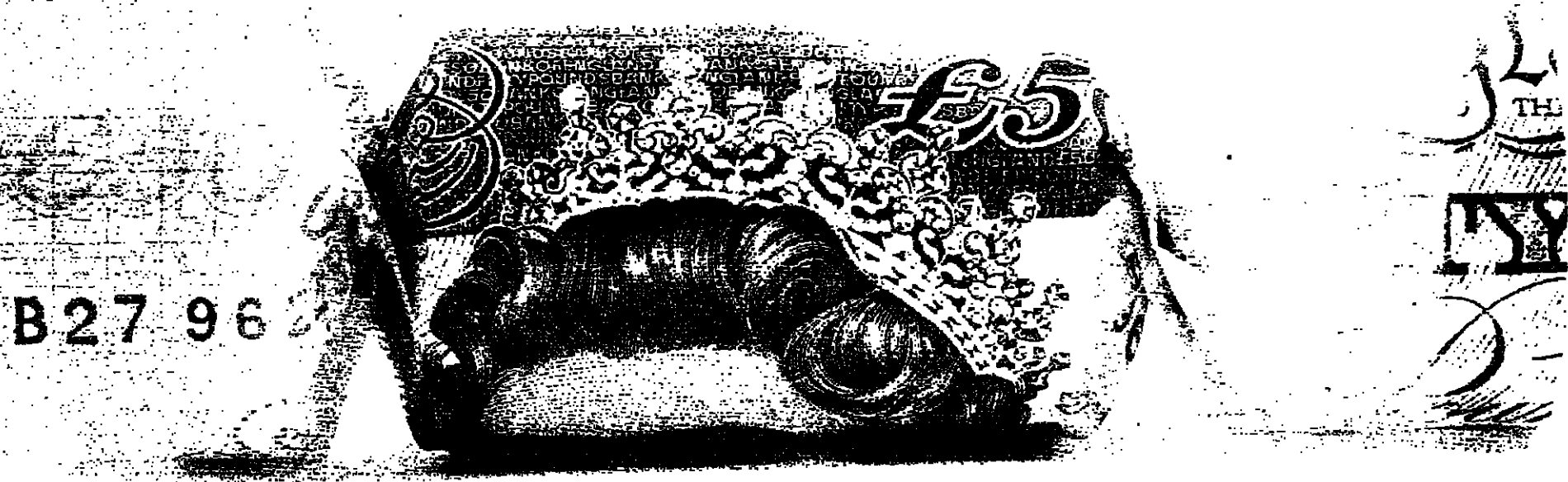
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international

France in revolt: As strikes show no sign of easing, government and unions move cautiously towards talks to find a solution

Strike bosses face deal dilemma

Mediator looks for light at the end of tunnel

MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

As the strikers and the French government gradually edge towards the negotiating process, talks that are inevitably going to end the past two weeks of mass protests much will depend on the individuals who have emerged as marshals, if not exactly leaders, of the strike movement. They are Marc Blondel, leader of the Force Ouvrière, and Louis Vianet of the CGT.

On the sidelines, though, is a figure who is no less crucial to the negotiating process: Nicole Notat, the 47-year-old head of the socialist-orientated CFDT, who has been distinguished by her moderate, and often isolated, stand on Alain Juppé's controversial social security reforms. Ms Notat's political sympathies are on the left, but her penchant for plain speaking, her willingness to stand alone, and her fair complexion have drawn comparisons in France with "Madame Thatcher".

By comparison, both Mr Blondel and Mr Vianet, who are in their 50s, come across in manner and language as old-style trade unionists, whose preoccupation is the "hard won social benefits" of their members. Both, however, have a good deal of personal and professional rivalry which they only reluctantly suppressed in the hope of seeing the end of the Juppé government.

Mr Blondel is the more deceptive character. Despite his proletarian gruffness, he is a lawyer, and also a gourmet; appreciating the restaurants used by the company directors he negotiates with.

He has a rhetorical tendency to sound totally uncompromising, while carefully leaving an escape route. His legalistic distinction this week between Mr Juppé's "consensus-seeking", and his own insistence on "negotiations" was a characteristic example. He also has a sense for where power lies, agreeing to sit on the committee which has until now agreed the welfare budget, and talking behind the scenes to Mr Chirac even before he was elected president. Now, however, he is said to be disillusioned.

Mr Vianet gives the impression of being a genuinely old-fashioned union leader, whose style has been cramped in recent weeks by his need for re-election at the CGT's congress this week. The coincidence of the congress with the strikes



Street clash: Protesters try to dodge tear gas during demonstrations over welfare reform in Nantes, eastern France

Photograph: Reuter

may have sharpened his words and made any compromise temporarily more difficult than it was going to be.

Despite representing between them more than 50 per cent of all public sector employees, Mr Blondel, Mr Vianet and Ms Notat are handicapped in their capacity to negotiate with the government by two factors. The discord between them weakens their collective authority, but a peculiarity of the current dispute also calls into question their claim to be leading it.

Three weeks ago, when the welfare reforms were announced, and even two weeks ago, when the transport strikes began in earnest and other public sector workers joined in, there was almost no visible leadership of the protesters.

For the first few weeks of the protest, at least, the initiative seemed to lie with the rank and file protesters, with Mr Blondel and Mr Vianet realising belatedly that here was a movement crying out for leadership.

Paris — The French government and trade union representatives seemed yesterday to be cautiously looking for a way out of the two-week-old protests that have halted much public transport, closed schools and threatened air services, writes Mary Dejevsky.

The government-appointed mediator for the national railway company, SNCF Jean Matteoli, started work yesterday afternoon, less than 24 hours after his appointment, receiving leaders of all the striking unions. The fact that the unions agreed to see Mr Matteoli, a former minister who is described as an expert conciliator, was greeted as a sign that the rail dispute at least might be amenable to a settlement.

As well as objecting to the government's overall plans for welfare reform, the railwaymen have a special grievance in a restructuring plan that was due to be finalised in the middle of this month. Designed to reduce SNCF's accumulated debt and large operating losses, the proposals include provision for the regionalisation of loss-making branch lines, which railwaymen believe will lead to closures and job losses.

Even as the meeting began,

however, there was evidence of confusion on the government side as to precisely what might be included in any talks. The unions have asked that the whole plan be suspended, but the industry minister, Franck Borotra, said yesterday the government had no intention of withdrawing it. The director of SNCF, who insisted last week that the plan was his and not the government's, has said nothing.

Although unions in other sectors appeared open to the possibility of wide-ranging talks on pensions and other questions offered by the social affairs minister, Jacques Barrot, there was no sign of the public sector strikes cracking, and on the main question of welfare reform, the government and unions still seemed far apart.

Having shelved the planned fiscal reform for at least a year, proposed a special commission to examine not only the terms of public sector pensions, but also their equivalence with those in the private sector, and offered talks on the rail plan, the government has now made concessions on almost every issue except the principle and main structure of the welfare reform. But there was no sign yesterday of strikes diminishing.

Soft centre to Kohl-Chirac hard core

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

Prospects for launching a single currency in 1999 will continue to preoccupy European Union leaders next week as they prepare for a summit of heads of state and government in Madrid.

The meeting, which is the climax of Spain's six-month EU presidency, is expected to agree a name for the single currency, and define the steps by which the EU will move to monetary union in the next three years.

The leaders are also due to discuss bringing into the EU the former Communist countries in central and eastern Europe, and the preparations for next year's Inter-Governmental Conference on reforming EU institutions. In what looked like a coded message to Britain, President Jacques Chirac of France and Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany proposed in Baden-Baden on Thursday that no country should be free to veto closer EU integration if other member states wish to press ahead.

The proposal was more a restatement of the existing Franco-German position than a bold initiative, and seemed to fall short of calls by Germany's ruling Christian Democrats last year for a "hard core" of EU states committed to deeper integration.

Significantly, the Baden-Baden meeting did not produce an explicit demand for more extensive powers for the European Parliament. Instead, in what looked like a German concession to French doubts about giving the legislature too much authority, Mr Kohl and Mr Chirac referred only to the need to "bind the European Parliament and national parliaments more than hitherto into the process of European integration".

Nevertheless, the two leaders reaffirmed their belief in extending the use of qualified

majority voting in EU decision-making, a point on which they have little common ground with John Major's Government.

They also called for a common policy on asylum and immigration, an idea that does not appeal to Britain and may prove difficult to implement in the light of French concerns about the Schengen agreement on abolishing internal EU frontiers.

Far from using the summit to discuss whether 1999 remains a realistic date for launching monetary union, EU leaders intend to settle the intransigent question of the single currency's name once and for all. The outcome could reveal a great deal about the relative weight of Germany, France, and the European Commission in the monetary union debate.

France and the Commission tended to favour the ecu, the name attached to the EU's present notional currency. However, Mr Kohl's government fears that the ecu will prove unsellable to Germans, already sceptical of monetary union, because the existing ecu has weakened against the German mark over the years.

Germany would prefer the currency to carry the prefix "Euro", Eurofrancs in France, Euroschillings in Austria, and so on. But some Commission officials say the name is ugly and unlikely to win the popular approval needed for monetary union to work.

Several other suggested names — ducat, crown, florin and franken — are considered dark-horse candidates. But Spain's Prime Minister, Felipe Gonzalez, said his countrymen would never accept a currency whose name sounded like Franco, the late dictator.

A failure at the summit to solve the matter would cast yet more doubt over the project starting on time. EU leaders also need to fix a date — the end of 1997 or early 1998 — for announcing which countries have qualified for the single currency.

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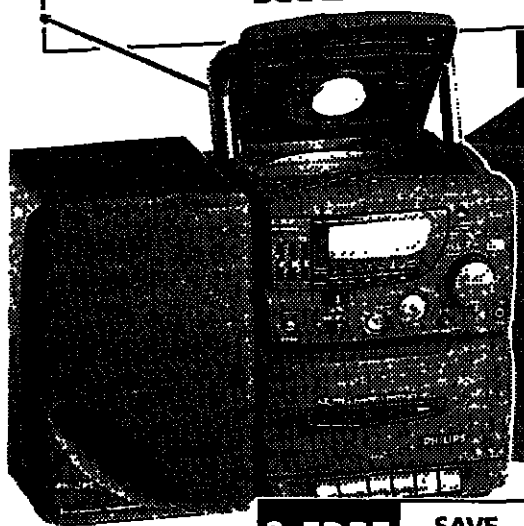
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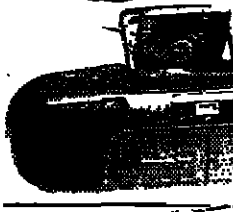
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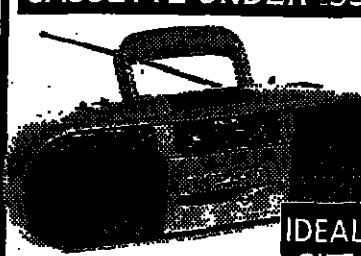
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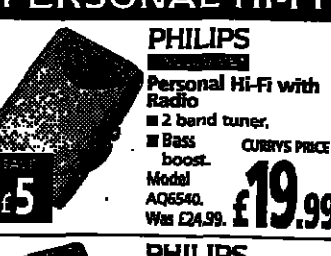
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No doubt there is a grain of truth in all these suppositions – after all, foreign powers and media proprietors certainly have their specific agendas. But the theories reveal above all the special way in which the Greeks see their place in the world. This is how the tourist brochure in my hotel room puts it: "Athens is everywhere. In every point on the map. And every point on the map is Athens. Because Athens is the centre of all the centres of the world." That's quite some responsibility.

[illegible]

international

Food aid runs out in starving N Korea

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY
Seoul

Half a million people in Communist North Korea face a winter of cold, disease and starvation unless foreign donors bail out a United Nations aid programme which is rapidly running out of cash and supplies. A liaison office established in the capital, Pyongyang, by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) will close on 23 December unless 15,000 tonnes of rice can be raised for victims of the worst floods in a century. The WFP arrived in North Korea in November in response to an appeal by the Pyongyang government, after summer storms washed away 1.5 million tonnes of grain. For the past fortnight it has been supervising the distribution of food in the areas worst hit by the floods but the supplies will soon run out, during the middle of the

North Korean winter, when temperatures fall as low as -18C. Doctors with the French charity Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) have found severe malnutrition among children and pregnant mothers. "It will be a long, cold, hungry winter," says Trevor Page, the WFP's country director in Pyongyang. "Some of the kids MSF are treating up there could be from Rwanda - wizened little children with pot bellies. People are starting to become restless and angry because they are not getting enough food." North Korea, the last of the old Stalinist dictatorships, has suffered poor harvests for most of the decade; even before the floods, it was predicting a deficit of 1.97 million tonnes. But the government's policy of "Juche", or self-reliance, had always prevented Pyongyang from asking for foreign help. In June, however, an agree-

ment was reached to receive 300,000 tonnes of rice from Japan - traditionally the object of the North's most vehement anti-imperialist rhetoric. The shipments were officially termed "loans", but the deal ran into trouble after officials in Pyongyang claimed that the rice was being offered as compensation for Japanese wartime aggression. Commercial deliveries from the Thai government were also suspended after the North failed to pay for shipments. And there have been fears that rice designated for starving peasants has been diverted to the country's massive army. Then in September came the unprecedented request for multinational assistance. A UN survey team reported that 20,250 tonnes of grain, worth \$8.8m (£5.6m), were necessary to see North Korea through the winter, enough to feed half a million people for 90 days. But Pyong-

yang's reputation for making political capital out of aid is hampering the WFP effort. An international appeal raised less than \$200,000. The first rice shipment came to only 5,140 tonnes, little more than a quarter of the required amount. The effects of widespread starvation on the political stability of North Korea are difficult to predict. Since the death last year of the founding president, Kim Il Sung, outsiders have had little idea who is in control. The stories of defections to the South have fuelled speculation about a power struggle between Kim's son, Kim Jong Il, and the million-strong military which maintains a state of war readiness. UN staff have reported tense scenes in the starving villages: in one incident food intended for one part of the country had to be distributed prematurely, after a truck was mobbed by angry peasants on the way.



Red carpet treatment: Cuban President Fidel Castro meets the Vietnamese Communist Party chief, Do Muoi, in Hanoi during his first visit to Vietnam in 22 years. Photograph: Lois Raimondo

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IN BRIEF

Madrid shields Paris from world's wrath

Brussels — Spain, anxious to keep the diplomatic peace at next week's European Union summit, has been pleading with EU countries not to vote against Paris in a forthcoming United Nations vote on nuclear testing. Diplomats said yesterday that EU foreign ministers were asked directly by Madrid this week to abstain in the UN General Assembly vote scheduled for Tuesday. Ten of the EU's 15 members came out against France in a preliminary vote in November that condemned nuclear testing. Paris reacted angrily, cancelling several meetings with EU partners and calling their opponents hypocrites. *Reuters*

China's chosen child enthroned in Tibet

Peking — Gyalsen Norbu was enthroned yesterday as the most important Buddhist leader remaining in Tibet in a hurried ceremony his Chinese backers hope will bolster their rule over the Himalayan region. With a top Communist Party official at his side, the six-year-old boy was proclaimed the 11th Panchen Lama inside the 15th-century Tashi Lhunpo monastery in central Tibet, the traditional seat of his predecessors. The enthronement and his selection 10 days ago culminates six months of work by Peking to weaken the authority of the Dalai Lama. Tibet's exiled spiritual leader. The Dalai Lama has recognised 6-year-old Gedun Choekyi Nyima as the Panchen Lama. *AP*

Deadly disease back in circulation

Geneva — A man in the Ivory Coast has been confirmed as having the deadly and highly-contagious Ebola disease, the World Health Organisation said yesterday. Asked about the laboratory results on blood samples taken from the patient, from a village in Liberia, a WHO spokesman said: "Yes, an Ebola case has been confirmed in Ivory Coast." The laboratory tests were carried out at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. *Reuters*

French left lost for words

Paris — Forty percent of French adults lack basic literacy skills, but France cut the embarrassing fact out of an international survey released this week. Results of the survey by the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development compared adult literacy among seven nations, but France abruptly pulled out of the survey and had officials excuse all references to France from the document, according to Albert Tuijman, a survey organiser at the Education and Training Division of the OECD. The study, conducted last year, indicated that in Sweden, about 7.5 per cent of 16- to 65-year-olds were deficient in literacy skills. The study did not rank the countries, but Mr Tuijman made his own ranking this way: Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, the United States and Poland. Had the figures for France been mentioned, the French would have been second to last, Mr Tuijman said. *AP*

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Mayoral election: An interview in the shower backfires on candidate in liberal San Francisco

Democrat exposes his naked ambition

The poet Maya Angelou has travelled to the city to support Brown. At a fund-raising dinner she exhorted San Franciscans to vote for Mr Brown and "change the flavour of the day". Re-working an old spiritual refrain, Ms Angelou concluded: "Moving out of darkness, moving toward a Brown morning."



Rollicking race: Frank Jordan (left) and Willie Brown are in the run-off for mayor of San Francisco next week

Jackson 'faking health problems'

But La Toya Jackson, the androgynous pop star's look-alike weird sister, said he was faking it. "I know all of Michael's little moves and his little schemes that he pulls when he thinks he needs attention. It's a publicity move," she said in a phone call to the *New York Daily News*.

A statement issued by Michael Jackson's doctor, who flew from California to attend to the emergency, said he was in a serious but stable condition and would "require several days of critical care, monitoring and treatment". Dr Alan Metzger said his patient was being treated

He was no less anxious about two concerts he was due to give this weekend at New York's Beacon Theatre. The show, which has now been indefinitely postponed, was to have been broadcast worldwide. Jackson, who insisted the broadcast should not be carried live, demonstrated his despair at the prospect of facing a disapproving audience by giving away the tickets free to members of his most ardent fan clubs instead of selling them to the public.

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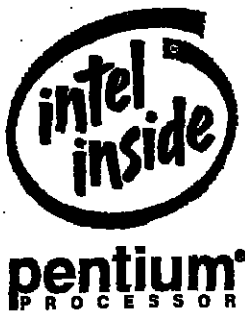
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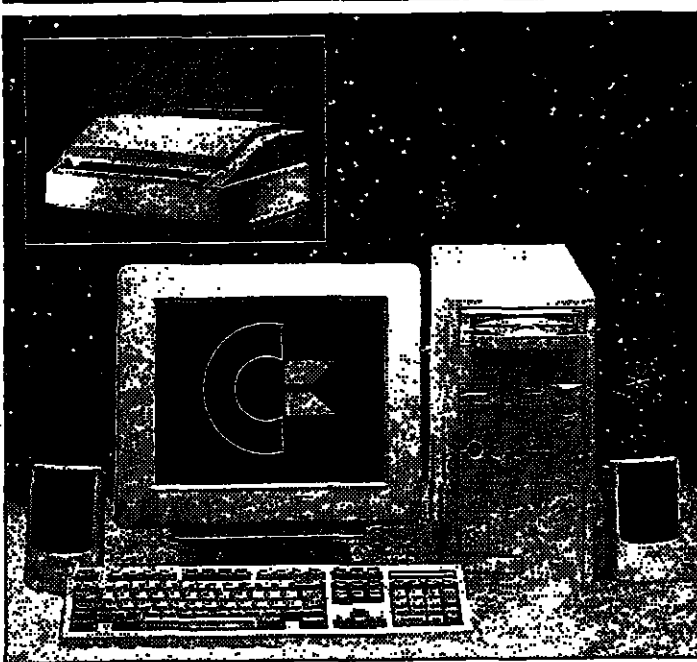
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international

Despair assails Palestinians trapped in a gilded cage

Arafat's peace agreement has left two former PLO fighters abandoned in a UN no man's land. Robert Fisk reports

Nagoura, southern Lebanon - Khamis Khodr has grown silent and resentful. Mohamed al-Gulani is at turns generous and angry. It is difficult to live in a gilded cage.

In the seven months and 23 days they have spent inside the United Nations headquarters in Southern Lebanon, trapped between the Israelis who deported them and the Lebanese who refused to receive them, Mr Khodr and Mr al-Gulani have moved from hope to despair.

Their refuge, through a humanitarian worker, has turned into a "golden jail". They have food, beds, books, television, the use of a phone, friends among the UN soldiers and £150 each a month but no passport, no country and no home.

"My life is over," Mr Khodr says and he means it, his eyes wandering over the endless blue wastes of the Mediterranean beyond the UN's barbed wire. Deported from Israel after serving prison sentences for attempted attacks on Israelis - he served 23 years for taking a rifle across the Jordan river to the occupied West Bank, not long after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, and Mr al-Gulani 10 years for driving a carload of explosives near Israeli-occupied Ramallah - both men were turned back by Lebanese soldiers the moment they were expelled across the Israeli border last April.

Back in the spring they thought a few complaints from the UN would secure their future. Their expulsion by Israel to Lebanon, in contravention of Articles 45 and 49 of the Geneva Convention, could surely be reversed.

Prematurely old at 58 and with a quarter-century of Israeli jails behind him, Mr Khodr, a PLO loyalist who would now like to go to Gaza, is in no state to take up arms again. Besides, Yasser Arafat's peace agreement with Israel means history has passed him by. Mr al-Gulani would be content merely to join his brother Omar in Jordan. But the Israelis refused both men permission to re-cross the border, claiming they were still security threats. Jordan then announced that Mr al-Gulani was a threat to its own security.

When humanitarian workers tried to arrange a family visit from Omar to Mohamed al-Gulani, the Lebanese refused him permission to pass through their territory from Jordan: Lebanon was still technically at war with Israel, they said. Now that Amman had made peace with Tel Aviv, he could surely travel through Israel. But the Israelis refused. Omar called each day, to the phone in the UN's military police guardroom, but had nothing to say to encourage his brother.

By mid-summer, the Arab, Is-

raeli and Western journalists who trooped to the UN HQ to interview the two Palestinians had, like the rest of the world, forgotten them. In desperation, Mr al-Gulani wrote a personal letter to Mr Arafat, pleading with the PLO leader to help them. Mr Khodr, he wrote, would be happy to live under the control of his old PLO masters in "free" Gaza. But Gaza is not free, because the Israelis have the final say on who may or may not enter Mr Arafat's little fiefdom.

"I wrote a one-page letter to Abu Amar [Mr Arafat] in July," Mr al-Gulani says. "A few days later, I received a phone call from someone in the PLO office in Gaza, called Dr Sami. He said Arafat had given his permission for both of us to move to Gaza, but the Israelis had vetoed our going there on the grounds of security. That's all. Nothing else. And we are still here."

Mr Khodr is building a cement wall for the UN soldiers, partly to show his gratitude for their personal kindness, while Mr al-Gulani wanders the camp, buying clothes and shoes at the PX store, watching a movie on Irish history given him by Irish troops, playing football and chess with his UN protectors, receiving a monthly joint stipend of £300 shared with Mr Khodr from the local PLO office up the Lebanese coast in



While shepherds watched: A Palestinian leading his flock of goats along an incomplete road which is being built to link Jerusalem with Jewish settlements on the West Bank. The PLO disputes the legality of the Israeli action. Photograph: Jim Hollander / Reuters

Rashidiya.

The two Palestinians listen to the Arabic service of the BBC and Israeli radio. When Mr Khodr suffered a hernia the UN operated on him. They have

tried to cure Mr al-Gulani's ear infection and asthma but the two Palestinians suffer the twin curse of international generosity and personal despair. "Of course we get angry, because we

want to start new lives," Mr al-Gulani says.

"We have served our sentences. We have paid for what we did for the PLO. Now the PLO has made peace with Is-

rael, but we rot here without a future. Why? I get angry, even at the UN. They want to send a guard with me wherever I go. They are kind, but what can I do?"

It was one of their United Nations protectors who found the right words to describe Mr Khodr and Mr al-Gulani. "Political ghosts" is what he called them.

Electoral boost from Rabin death fades away

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

As Israel emerges from the trauma of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the Labour Party has been alarmed to discover that the political landscape has not changed markedly in its favour, and that it will have difficulty winning the election in October next year.

Latest opinion polls show Shimon Peres, the Prime Minister, benefiting politically from his predecessor's murder, but the emergence of three new centre parties is robbing Labour of crucial votes. If the election were held now, Labour would win 44 seats in the Knesset, the same number it took in 1992. Its left-wing ally, Meretz, would win nine seats, instead of 12.

The danger for Labour is less Likud, the principal right-wing opposition party, than a break-away faction known as the Third Way, which opposes Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights in return for a peace treaty with Syria.

The latest poll suggests that this party would take four Labour seats with another two going to a Russian immigrants' party that was set up by Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet dissident. In 1992 most of the 600,000 Russian Jewish immigrants voted Labour.

"The country remains deeply divided," a senior member of the Labour party said. "The gap between the two sides is unbridgeable."

The division between the secular and the religious, which is a traditional factor in Israeli politics, has been greatly exacerbated by the withdrawal from the West Bank, which religious nationalists believe is land that was given by God to Israel.

Supporters of Labour and Meretz held the orthodox religious leadership and Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of Likud, responsible for setting the stage for Rabin's death.

Mr Netanyahu has been telling his own party that the collapse of support for Likud in the polls would pass, but his own unpopularity is deep. Even Ehud Olmert, the right-wing mayor of Jerusalem, refused - unlike Mr Netanyahu - to attend the notorious rally in Jerusalem at which pictures of Rabin as Hitler were displayed.

None of this will be forgotten next October, when Israel for the first time elects a prime minister separately from membership of the Knesset. Mr Peres has never been as popular as was Rabin, but he can almost certainly beat Mr Netanyahu.

In a straight fight, a poll by the daily *Ma'ariv* shows Mr Peres would get 55 per cent of the vote and Mr Netanyahu 31 per cent. Another poll gives Mr Peres 46 per cent and Mr Netanyahu 28 per cent.

Some members of Likud criticise Mr Netanyahu, whose character resembles that of Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the US House of Representatives, for his alliance with the far right. But there is little they can do about it. In the unlikely event of a leadership contest, his strongest potential rival, Dan Meridor, would now be considered too liberal for many Likud supporters.

There is no doubt, however, that Mr Netanyahu is worried. A sign is his reported attempt to bring back into the party David Levy, the former foreign minister, whom he was glad to be rid of in June. He is now offering Mr Levy the number two slot on the Likud ticket.

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PLUG THEM
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Is computer technology the key to learning or does it make automatons of children? Paul Vallely reports from a high tech classroom

Technology embraced: Thurston Upper School in Suffolk, where pupils spend up to 13 hours a week at a computer terminal

Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

Richard Fawcett sat in the corner of the pub with a pen in his hand and a furrowed brow. He was trying to work out the square root of 24.8 using the method he had been taught 30 years before at school. He had no trouble remembering that his log tables had a blue canvas cover, nor that his slide-rule box was also blue, but the square root technique eluded him until his third attempt.

"I know how to do it but it's old knowledge," said the head-teacher of Thurston Upper School, near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, which has, for the past three years, been reaping the benefit of a £250,000 Technology Schools' Initiative grant to upgrade its computers and other high-tech equipment.

This week, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority announced that calculators would be banned from maths tests for 11-year-olds, and possibly for 14-year-olds, too. This news may have prompted Mr Fawcett into a bout of logarithmic nostalgia but it also prompts some more philosophical questions about how technology shapes education - and not just how things are taught but, more profoundly, whether it alters our notion of what knowledge is.

Mr Fawcett sipped at a pint of Adams and considered the Romans. It was no wonder that they were not exactly whizzo at maths when you consider the problem of dividing MCLVIII by XXIX. All their achievements in other fields did not take them much

When the Arabs hit on their system - with its brilliant concept of zero - things changed dramatically

It was only when the Arabs hit upon their more flexible system - with its brilliant concept of the number zero - that things began to change dramatically and vast new horizons opened. A new technique had changed the nature of knowledge.

The history of learning has been the story of such leaps. The microscope made us consider diseases not in terms of symptoms but in terms of what might be their causes. The telescope made possible another such giant step in astronomy.

New technologies have affected the sociology of learn-

ing, too. When books were copied by hand, effort could be expended only on the greatest works, such as the Scriptures. But with the invention of the printing press, books became a commonplace. This not only altered our system of governance, aiding the growth of democracy and the decline of feudalism (the authorities recognised this instinctively, which is why they tried to ban "seditious tracts"); it also meant that "light entertainment" such as Shakespeare got into print.

Such were the developments of several millennia. It is easy to forget how far we have come in a generation, not only with calculators and computers but with TV and video, faxes and photocopying, and even the invention of the humble bottle of Tippex correcting fluid. All in Mr Fawcett's view, have had a significant impact on the values of modern education, for better and for worse.

For the worse? Some of that is evident enough. Yesterday, as we toured the school's large low-rise building, which spreads itself generously over the flat Suffolk farmland, we came across a business studies student caught printing out his work without having checked it through, on the assumption that the computer spellchecker would have caught all the errors (it hadn't). Then, just off one of the workshop-like classrooms, with their banks of computers set in rows around the wall, there was the sixth-former on a business studies vocational

course who admitted, to the horror of his classmates, it must be said, that if he went into a shop to buy six Mars bars at 27p each he wouldn't have any idea how much they cost unless he had a calculator; without one, he assumed the shopkeeper would get it right.

Such inability is not uncommon nationally, Mike Aston, director of the Advisory Unit on Computers in Education, ruefully recalls the GCSE question which asked candidates to cost the painting of a room given the dimensions. One answered £3.5m. "He could use the calculator all right. But he didn't understand the difference between the surface area and the volume so he had filled the room with paint."

But there are also the countless examples of technology which is assisting for the better. At Thurston, where pupils spend anything between one and 13 hours a week at a computer terminal, a satellite link to French TV gives language students access to contemporary idioms in native speech. Calculators enable students in chemistry and other applied sciences to bypass arithmetical drudgery and wrestle with the more interesting problems at a higher plane. Word processor spreadsheets permit students to run their own businesses, factoring in decisions on prices and other variables and studying the outcome. Thurston has been conducting a joint business venture with students at an entrepreneurial college in Finland - the school fax has

allowed some 200 exchanges of documents to be made in the academic year instead of the 20 or so that might have been possible by post.

The key question is how to strike a balance between the pros and cons. Some trade-offs we have to accept: it was ever thus. Many of the bards of the ancient Celtic and Greek traditions refused to learn to read and write for fear it would destroy their poetry. Writing is a memory substitute - many illiterate people have amazing memories - and the penalty for the writing which has increased the collective memory of society is the diminution of the memory of individuals.

But not everyone finds the present trade-offs acceptable. "Some technology mixes children up further," says the Tory MP and former headmaster, Sir Rhodes Boyson. "Countries in the Far East have the best balance. There, children are not allowed to use a calculator before secondary school. Germany is the same. In the beginning, they have to learn their tables; calculators can become an aid to speed once they are competent. The same should be true of computers."

Chris Butler, head of information technology at Thurston, agrees with the philosophy but not the timetable: "Children have to have some basics laid before they can use technological aids, but at what age?" His colleague Stewart Cheney, who oversees the school's vocational programme, also sees a definitional issue - the elder generation notice what the

young can't do that they can; but the things they can't do, which the young can, the older people don't even know about. "And there are problems with memory: the things older people are horrified that 11-year-olds can't do, they probably couldn't do themselves until they were 13; they've just forgotten. They think they knew Shakespeare when they were 14 but they are in fact remembering what they did at A level."

And then there is the hidden moral dimension. Disciplines of mind have all kinds of moral correlates: sloppy work equals sloppy thought, and so forth. O tempora, o mores. But imperatives change. For a monk working on an illuminated scroll, accuracy and intuitively good spelling were a first-order requirement; one slip at the end could mean that days of work went in the bin. But the premium shifted with the invention of printing, and has moved again with the transient text on a computer screen. "New technology might not do much for kids' spelling but it does make it easier for them to produce their best work," said Chris Butler. "They are more willing to correct and improve."

This, then, is the problem. The word processor might - like Tippex - encourage pupils to revise more. But it can also encourage laziness and cut-and-paste plagiarism. The photocopy can make information more accessible; but it also tempts us into acquiring knowledge without then forcing the necessary effort to digest it

properly. The video can allow chemistry students to see experiments that are too costly or dangerous to do in the school lab. But it can also turn a student's interaction with a work of literature into an entirely passive exercise which doesn't much enhance the reading of the text.

"We're the last of the computer illiterates," said one

I was horrified when Tony Blair said that he wanted to link all schools up to the Internet'

Thurston sixth-former, Matthew Kirk, a humanities student. "The kids who are two years behind us are different creatures." What follows this transitional generation may be changes it is difficult for older to conceive. The current growth in information availability is phenomenal. There was a time when it was possible for a Leonardo to know almost everything. Not now. Even the top academics cannot master everything in their field. Those who moan about the growth of specialisation and the lack of breadth in modern education forget about the exponential growth

in information and knowledge. And this poses a problem in itself.

"I was horrified when Tony Blair said he wanted to link all schools up to the Internet," says Mike Aston of Computers in Education, "because schools and teachers aren't ready for it. The databases to which they will have access through the Internet are immense so they will have to learn more about how to search, extract and evaluate. This will have a major impact on the role of the teacher. They will have to become enablers in a three-cornered experience helping children to deal with information they themselves don't understand. Many teachers will be frightened to let go of their traditional roles."

Then there is the cost. Even a leading-edge school like Thurston has nightmares about the cost of upgrades. Without them, says Richard Fawcett, "we are condemning tomorrow's students to using yesterday's technology."

But in one area the benefits are clear. Even at break time, the computers all across the school are in use. In the library, a 13-year-old is glued to a CD-Rom, looking up information for his project on trains. Until he arrived at the start of term, he had never used one. Nor, he says, did he ever use the library in his middle school. He was, he said, without looking up from the screen, not very keen on books. "It's break time," said the master in charge. "I'll just finish this," the boy said.

Jo Brand's week

I knew I would eventually have to become a living journalistic cliché in this column, so I am very relieved to find myself sitting hunched over the word processor at two o'clock in the morning with a deadline looming. So this is what it feels like. I'd always believed that at this point I was supposed to be fired with a feverish inspiration that would catapult me into producing fast-flowing and witty opinion. Instead, I'm shattered and I'd quite like to go to bed.

We spent the final date of the tour in Cambridge, tonight, where experience has taught me that the audience tends to be somewhat restrained and a bit upmarket. Last time I worked here I had a section in my act that involved waving a mystery object, consisting of a straw tube with a hook on it, at the audience and asking them what it was. (It was, in fact, a "wife leader" - traditionally attached to the finger of the wife in the Caribbean so the husband can lead her around.) The suggestion I received from a well-to-do woman in the Cambridge audience was that it was "a cassava juice extractor". I'm sorry, I don't even know what a cassava is, let alone how you extract juice from it. I'll obviously have to start paying more attention in Safeway's exotic foods section. I personally preferred the suggestion from a member of the Liverpool audience as I waved my wife leader at them. "It's a fat bird with a stick," bellowed some wag.

On Sunday afternoons I have a habit of gazing vacantly at the telly, while telling myself that next Sunday I'll go and do something constructive: so that was how the *Smash Hits* Poll Winners Party came to wash past my eyes. I didn't realise that they had a section for comedy and was shocked to see my mush appear on the screen and discover I'd come fifth in the vote for favourite comedian.

Considering that most people who read *Smash Hits* tend to be pre-pubescent girls who weigh about the same as an atom, I was surprised I hadn't been voted Favourite Grown-Up for a Week at the Betty Ford Clinic.

I like the idea that a video of highlights from the Tony party conference (to be used in a membership drive) has been tampered with by editors. No, they haven't airbrushed Michael Portillo's face into a human one or voiced over John Major's nasal tones with a touch of Schwarzenegger. They've shifted the audience response around. People are shown clapping at speeches they weren't even present at and looking sullen at speeches they apparently cheered at on the day. One look at the audiences who attend these conferences is surely enough to put



Best Stand-up Comic

into a morose cabaret in which dressing up in various stupid outfits seems to be the norm.

These Russian geese make our Westminster lot look like grown-ups. We all accept that Screaming Lord Sutch is a bit of a laugh, but I don't think anyone would be too happy if he turned up in the Commons and tabled a motion pertaining to the liberation of jelly, or the freedom to wear a badger on your head on Wednesdays.

Many thanks to the woman in a chemist's in Bexhill who came swiftly to the rescue of myself and John the tour manager when we staggered in there last week with monumental hangovers. Having purchased some Week Your Hangover Cure, this woman very kindly produced two glasses of water into which we tipped the powder, watched it fizz and then consumed it on the premises. That's the way chemists should be.

My mum expressed her relief this week that I wasn't present at the British Comedy Awards. (All right, folks, yes, I won for stand-up.) I think she thought Jonathan Ross would try and make me cry. I was quite glad, too, although in some ways I wish I had been there last year when I got nominated for three awards and didn't win anything. I'd have liked to have had a bash at

dissolving into piteous tears at the sadistic moment the cameras invade you, as you digest the knowledge that you're a loser. Everyone faces it so bravely, I'd like to see a few sulks and Betty Fidler temper tantrums. I'd also like to congratulate Jack Dee for winning Top Personality and thank him for his message on my answerphone pointing out that I might have got something for stand-up, but I am obviously lacking a



When it comes to personality, he's tops

I had a great night in Swansea on Wednesday, doing a show with some comics on behalf of a long-standing community of people who risk losing their homes because the land on which they live has been bought by a rich bloke who doesn't want them there. The campaign for the Hall's Field community is going swimmingly.

Although we were in a night-club that looked like it would burst into *Saturday Night Fever* at any moment, it was a good laugh, and it's quite a while since I've done a show in front of a DJ's box complete with DJ. The bouncers looked like steroids on legs and I was eternally grateful I wasn't an unwelcome visitor. One of them asked me to send him a photo and it was no surprise he was called "Big" Dom. I'll make sure I write

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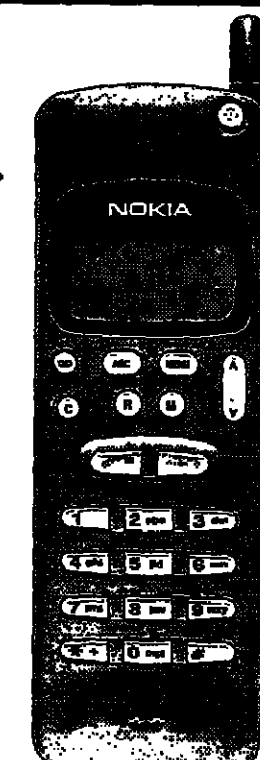
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The Queen of Hearts turns up trumps

The Queen would never have done what the Princess of Wales did this week. She must have been appalled at her daughter-in-law's indiscretion, her flagrant breaching of royal protocol. There was Diana, on a platform with a Labour politician, letting everyone know how badly she felt about homelessness. She spoke emotionally about "sixteen- and seventeen-year olds who resort to begging, or worse, prostitution, to get money in order to eat. Young people whose physical and mental health has been severely damaged by life on the streets."

This is not the discreet, diplomatic, Windsor way of doing things. The closest the Queen has ever got to telling us how she feels about anything was when she reached for a Latin textbook. "Annus horribilis" is hardly language to stir the hearts of the nation. Diana would not use it; she would probably think it was a form of colonialist irritation gone wrong.

The Princess of Wales is different from her in-laws. She "really cares" and she is not going to stay quiet. Her latest intervention had Tory backbenchers jumping up and down as though she had wrapped herself in the red flag, joined Tony Blair's front-bench team and was on the stump for Labour. She had "been duped by a socialist speech writer," fumed Harry Greenway, a Conservative MP.

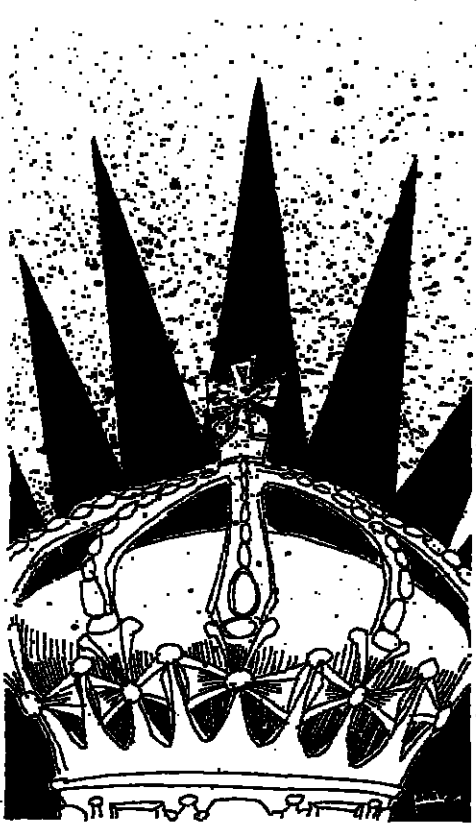
It is easy to understand his fears. The princess shared a platform with Jack Straw, Labour's home affairs spokesman. She is clearly exploring new possibilities for her role in

British life. Diana is an exciting and unpredictable figure, unwilling to be fettered by Buckingham Palace precedent and practice. More nervous Tory MPs, nursing tiny majorities, can perhaps be forgiven for believing, in their wider moments, that she could even become party political, an unguided missile fired into the general election campaign.

But it is ridiculous to think that the Queen of Hearts is Labour's trump card. Her speech was free of party favouritism. This was Diana having her say on a social issue about which she feels passionately, at a conference organised by a charity, Centrepoint, of which she is patron.

The problem that the Princess of Wales poses to the Establishment does not concern politics. She is well aware of the requirement that members of the Royal Family should stay above party politics. She knows that her position would become untenable if she broke with that tradition. Her challenge, rather, is about style. She is unwilling to go along with a tight-lipped, reserved, buttoned-up, elitist image of monarchy that is utterly removed from the way people live their everyday lives.

In a nutshell, the Princess of Wales is coming to represent an alternative vision of the modern monarchy. If the latter was re-created in her image, it would still be charismatic and awesome, but it would also be much more in touch with the concerns and realities of most people's lives. She speaks to and on behalf of modern



young women. Her trips to the gym, her talk about the difficulties of being the right type of parent, her confessions about bulimia and her speeches on a host of social problems from homelessness to AIDS, strike a powerful chord with the rest of society.

The Queen and her children traditionally steer clear of this difficult territory. The Prince of Wales has his own public causes. He has vented his spleen on the brutalism of some modern architecture, standards of spoken English, and on environmental issues. But he does not have his wife's common touch. He will always remain a rather isolated and remote figure, a product of another, fast-disappearing age.

As for the Queen, she prides herself on a detached monarchical style. She has an almost Pavlovian aversion to appearing partisan. Not even Pierre Brassard, the disc jockey who masqueraded as the Canadian premier, could trick her into abandoning her studied diplomatic persona.

The neutral, neutered character offered by the monarchy is a long-standing element in the British constitution. It has served the present queen well, particularly during the Eighties when the prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, was a divisive force in British life. But her studied distance from day-to-day issues leaves the Royal Family peculiarly out of touch: the monarchy's habits, ways and image are increasingly out of touch, belonging more to the Fifties than the Nineties.

Princess Diana takes more risks. She speaks about emotions. She is exploring the limits. She is breaking fresh ground. That's dangerous: if she gets the national mood wrong, she risks alienating the public. But her style also offers an opportunity to reinvigorate an institution which has become dangerously out of touch with a people who, after all, pay the bills.

The events of the past couple of days resemble similar attacks on the Church of England in the Eighties, when it became a vocal critic of poverty. The thundering Establishment said that the church had no place in politics and should stay quiet. But the bishops kept up their barbed comments, won friends beyond the ordinary faithful and, as a result, gave themselves a little more relevance.

Likewise, the Princess of Wales will probably annoy many people with her outspokenness. Her motivation may be questioned: it seems to be a combination of revenge against her husband, an obsession with self-publicity and a genuine desire to do good. But, whatever her aims, she could, in the process of tackling controversial issues, free the Royal Family from its emotional strait-jacket and rescue it from its growing isolation. That would be a service to us all.

The Princess of Wales will almost certainly never be Queen. But at the very minimum she could give Charles - and her son - a model for a more open style of monarchy, at once more risky and more relevant to modern times.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Let 100 currencies bloom

From Mr James Robertson
Sir: One can sympathise with Andrew Marr's dream ("The secret that Blair and Major share" 5 December) of stirring up apathy about Europe. But he is unlikely to realise it. And that is probably just as well.

Our politicians may agree with each other that the monetary debate boils down to this: everyone must use a single European currency, instead of national currencies; no, everyone must go on using national currencies; no, no, a decision must be postponed. But they are wrong. That is not the whole story.

What about allowing a common European currency to develop organically, without compulsion, alongside national currencies, as increasing numbers of businesses and others find it convenient to use it? There are strong political and economic arguments for that approach, as John Major recognised when he was Chancellor. It is an obvious fallback strategy for the European project, if and when Maastricht fails. And it has a further advantage,

not so widely recognised as yet. Acceptance of the principle of coexisting currencies at different levels could give new hope of economic recovery to many cities and other sub-national areas. One of the problems for the "economic crisis regions" today is that they cannot earn enough national currency to support economic transactions within their own boundaries.

If, as part of a new multi-level currency regime, local government authorities were allowed to issue local purchasing power in the form of local currencies for local use, that could be a great help.

It would be good if the *Independent* could encourage this kind of fresh thinking in the debate about Europe, rather than apathy. Today's heresy can turn out to be tomorrow's conventional wisdom. Yours faithfully, JAMES ROBERTSON Chislehurst, Essex. The writer is author of *Future Wealth: A New Economics for the 21st Century*.

Quality television direct from the West End

From Mr Noble Wilson
Sir: David Lister's case (Section Two; "As not seen on TV", 6 December) for the making of television recordings of some of the best theatre productions in the British theatre is well argued. It should now be perfectly possible to negotiate rights for domestic and international sales, both with Equity and the technicians' unions. The multi-channel future is nearly upon us and there will be a need for good, quality programming.

More difficult to overcome is the belief that good television drama can only come from the studio. There was a period in the Fifties when BBC Television transmitted live relays from shows running in the West End theatres, but because managers were nervous about the effect on their audiences, it was only allowed to take place of the productions.

To those of us involved in directing these outside broadcasts, it sometimes seemed that only the shows that were not doing too well would agree to a relay. The technology of the time also did not help: cameras

were bulky, a lot of extra lighting was required, and good audio coverage of actors moving about the stage was very hard to achieve.

Today, all that has changed: cameras are smaller, lighter, and more sensitive, which means less additional lighting needs to be installed. Radio microphones ensure perfect speech from any part of the stage. Digital video recording guarantees the quality of reproduction.

It really ought to be possible to ensure that memorable productions can be enjoyed, long after they have closed, by audiences in Britain and abroad. Yours etc, NOBLE WILSON Long Ditton, Surrey 7 December

From Mr David Aukin
Sir: Channel 4 has over the last few years commissioned a number of stage plays for the screen (6 December), including Alan Bennett's *Madness of George III*, Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden*, David Mamet's *Oleanna*, Jonathan Harvey's

Beautiful Thing (now in post-production) and, as David Lister mentions, Adrian Noble is currently shooting *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

They were commissioned because I felt they would work well as films and on television. What would convert *ad hoc* decisions into policy is if the Government would release the channel from its obligations under the funding formula to pay annual cheques (this year estimated at more than £70m) to ITV and allow us instead to spend the money on more programmes, especially drama, which if it's to be done well can be expensive.

The question is whether it would enrich our lives more for Granada to use our money to fund their acquisition of *Porte* or for Deborah Warner's production of *Richard II* to be brought to our screens. It's a tough one. Yours faithfully, DAVID AUKIN Head of Drama Channel Four Television London, SW1 6 December

Labour fails French strikers

From Mr Walter Cairns
Sir: As someone who has just returned from France, I was interested to read Tony Barber's perceptive analysis of the current industrial unrest there and its significance for the future of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) ("The battle for Europe's future", 6 December).

During my stay, I was particularly struck by the bitterness experienced by the strikers against a government that is prepared to sacrifice the social consensus, based on what has hitherto been very generous welfare provision, on the altar of EMU - the benefits of which they were very unsure about.

I did, however, feel extremely embarrassed when I was asked whether they could count on the support of the British Labour and Trade Union movement. I had to reply very evasively in view of the deafening silence that has emanated from John Smith House on this issue.

In view of the fact that the French Trade Union movement is currently waging a fight that is much more general in its scope than the safeguarding of its members' social security rights - to wit, the whole future of the welfare state in Europe - I find this Trappist monk approach quite astounding. Cynics might conclude that the Labour Party is so frightened of losing its respectability at home that it will not even support the justified demands of its comrades elsewhere in Europe. Yours sincerely, WALTER CAIRNS Manchester 6 December

Can't afford a church wedding

From Mrs M Harris
Sir: I have been reading reports from the General Synod of the Church of England regarding marriage and deploring the drop in the number of church marriages, but nowhere have I seen any reference to the high cost of getting married in a state church today.

For young unemployed couples, living on state benefit and trying to get a home together, this might be partly the answer. Without help from parents who might also be on a low income, it might seem impossible.

Maybe the Church should take a tip from the main street banks, which offer university students interest-free loans in the hope that when circumstances improve they will retain the students' custom. Has the Church not heard of the widow's mite? Yours faithfully, M. HARRIS Coleford, Gloucestershire 6 December

Snowbound with the Swiss

From Mr Neville Conder
Sir: If we have to sell British Rail, and bearing in mind the disruption at the first fall of snow, let's sell to the Swiss. Yours faithfully, NEVILLE CONDER London, SW7 7 December

DAVID AARONOVITCH

A matter of fax

What I want to know is this: who framed Greg Knight? Greg who? Privy Counsellor, Deputy Chief Whip, popular Tory MP for Derby North, the Right Honourable Greg Knight, that's Greg who. Since last weekend, Mr Knight has been hounded by the gutter press in the shape of the *Independent* on Sunday and the *Derby Evening Telegraph*.

And why? It's a strange tale. On Budget day, Ken Clarke announced that cars more than 25 years old would no longer be subject to road tax. Hooray, said vintage car enthusiasts.

Whoopie, said the House of Commons Classic Car Club, which shot off faxes to car mags *Popular Classics* and *Classic Car Weekly*, praising the Chancellor for his wisdom and Mr Knight (an enthusiast himself) for exercising his influence to bring about this excellent change.

So far, so good. The trouble started when some bright spark of a journalist noticed that the two faxes, though identically worded, carried the names of two completely different Honourable Secretaries - a Miss C Seymour and a Mrs T Southcott. Said spark started to check out the Commons Classic Car Club. Nobody other than Mr Knight could be found who had heard of it.

Were the HonSecs for real? Yes, Mr Knight could vouch for them (both turned out to be his personal assistants). But no, he was not sure who else was in the club - he was a busy man, attended events when he could, couldn't explain the change of HonSecs, but it is the season for AGMs.

Sure, you could jump to the conclusion that Mr Knight is a rather preposterous self-publicist with a slim majority, who arranged to have self-congratulatory press releases from a fictitious organisation circulated to the classic car world. But isn't that a bit too neat?

I have a different theory. Mr Knight has made enemies in his time. Take the occasion when he parked no fewer than four of his beautiful vintage cars in the House of Commons car park. Now you or I, finding

our usual parking spaces blocked by several elegant motors belonging to the same person, would almost certainly smile, admire their classic lines and drive on, wishing the enthusiast well. MPs, unfortunately, are not so magnanimous. This incident alone would provide sufficient motive for what I believe then followed.

Several years ago, my theory goes, some MP set up the Classic Car Club and invited a number of colleagues to join. One was Greg Knight. As time passed, the membership died off, or failed to be re-elected, leaving only a few MPs and others, many of whom had forgotten the club even existed.

But there were two women prepared to keep the standard flying. Enthused by their mutual employer, Miss Seymour and Mrs Southcott first joined and later ran the club, whose Annual General Meeting fell due at the end of November. This year, one of the Ms S's, as Honourable Secretary, booked the Grand Committee Rooms and posted notices. Come the day and the hour and - horror! - the Commons was voting and the two women found themselves alone in the vast room.

Undeterred, they pressed ahead with the only two items on the agenda - the expression of thanks to Mr Knight for his efforts on road tax (passed, nem con) and the election of officers, in which - naturally - Ms S succeeded Ms S for the period 1996.

But who was going to convey the club's resolution to the public? After discussion, the two women decided to divide the task between them - the outgoing and the incoming HonSecs would appear on alternate press releases. End of story.

What was dishonourable was the decision of Mr Knight's jealous colleagues to refuse to come forward and validate his account of the club, thus leaving him looking ridiculous. But they know who they are. And if I have anything to do with it, readers of the *Independent* will be told who they are. They have been warned!

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Both BR and Railtrack said today they were ready for anything the weather could throw at them - *Report in Tuesday's Evening Standard, before snow crippled the rail network in the South-east.*

In Britain, if you are blonde and have blue eyes, then you are called a bimbo, which is rather unfortunate for 90 per cent of Scandinavians - *Ulrika Jonsson, television personality, who is Swedish.*

In their teenage years, when your average lad is out getting his first woman, a lot of gay young people end up going to church instead because they are open to other sources of beauty - *the Rev Michael Vasey, who says Jesus would not have been hostile towards gays.*

Some people who are going to find themselves outside Parliament in two years' time are in for a fright, because they have no qualification other than politics and there is nothing so dead as an ex-MP - *Lord Harris of Greenwich, Liberal Democrat peer.*

A four-letter word can never make an unfunny line funny, and every night these comedians prove my point. Did you ever hear Tommy Cooper swear? Or Ken Dodd? Or Morecambe and Wise? - *Eddie Braben, Morecambe and Wise scriptwriter.*

In favour of a leghold trap ban

From Mr Ken Collins, MEP
Sir: I refer to the full-page advertisement in today's *Independent* placed by a coalition of animal welfare groups (7 December). It states that the European Commission has decided to propose a post-nomement of the implementation of the leghold trap ban.

The European Parliament will of course be consulted on these proposals, possibly as early as this Monday. The Environment Committee, which will be the lead committee, has already made it clear in previous discussions that it supports an immediate implementation of the ban, and that it abhors the Commission's failure to enact the necessary implementing regulations.

This is also the view of the Parliament's largest political group. Although we have not yet had an opportunity to study the Commission proposals, it is unlikely that our view will change.

Yours sincerely, KEN COLLINS MEP for Strathclyde East (Lab) Brussels 7 December

The writer is chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection.

Sheep's brains on the menu

From Mr Steve Robson
Sir: Today, in your letters column, Dr H. C. Grant says that because sheep brains were removed from the carcasses they did not enter the human food chain and so posed no risk. They were removed and sold as a common food to be prepared in a variety of ways. Any French or English cookbook will give examples.

So where does that leave us? Yours faithfully, STEVE ROBSON London, SE1 7 December



William Tyndale's New Testament, 1536 Mary Evans

In the vernacular

From Mr Gregory Paul Morris
Sir: In response to R. V. Wells (letter, 6 December), the Roman church actively sponsored Latin translations of the "original" Hebrew scriptures in the 16th century, as the translation of Sanctus Pagninus and the Alcala and Complutensian Polyglot Bibles testify. We owe a great debt to Sebastian Munster, another early Roman Catholic Hebraist, whose Latin translation was one of the favoured crabs of those who produced the Authorised Version.

The Church was increasingly

suspicious of Judaizing influences, however, and became rabidly hostile to the concept of a Bible that mediated the sacred writings to the ploughboy and the artisan without the help of an unlearned and superstitious clergy. Nowhere was the Roman church more zealous in trying to quash the vernacular Bible than in England: Sir Thomas More claimed that Tyndale's New Testament had thousands of errors, whereas modern scholars can appreciate how advanced it was in its day.

Yours faithfully, GREGORY P. MORRIS St Mary's College St Andrews, Fife

By Jupiter, there is no Planet X!

From Dr David A. Rothery
Sir: What a pity Tom Wilkie ended his otherwise excellent article on spacecraft that have gone to Jupiter and beyond (8 December) with a paragraph about a "tenth planet beyond the orbit of Pluto" that might have been written years ago.

Few planetary scientists now believe that "Planet X" can exist. The strongest evidence against it comes from observations in recent years of dozens of small icy objects, 200km and smaller in size, that are scattered throughout the region of Pluto's orbit and beyond. This is none other than the Kuiper belt, predicted by the Dutch-American astronomer Gerard Kuiper in 1951 as representing debris from the birth of the solar system, too widely dispersed to have aggregated into planet-size objects.

Extrapolating from the very small areas of sky so far surveyed in detail, it has been suggested that there are probably about 100 million of these more than 10km across. Whatever the total, the very presence of the Kuiper belt is a strong indication that there is no large planet out there.

Yours sincerely, D. A. ROTHERY Department of Earth Sciences The Open University Milton Keynes 8 December

The benefits of a good consultant

From Mr Martin Leith
Sir: In Chris Blackhurst's piece ("Ministers fail to justify consultants' fees of £95m", 4 December) health minister Tom Sackville is reported as saying that consultants were used to assist in improving efficiency, but that "it is not possible to assess the savings which are a direct consequence of their activity".

Mr Blackhurst infers that the Government has no idea how much benefit consultants provide. But he ignores the fact that organisations such as the NHS hire consultants to bring benefits other than costs savings. These include helping them think in new, more effective ways, contributing specialist expertise, acting as enablers,

and supplying temporary manpower to help put plans into action. Furthermore, good consultants work hard to keep up to date with current management thinking, and although a few Luddite Tory MPs may disapprove, much of this emanates from business schools, some of the American ones.

Consuming is a highly competitive marketplace and consultants have to be effective to survive. Consultants are challenging to work with. They ask uncomfortable questions. They bring skeletons from closets. They have high standards of quality. They work long hours. The good ones are in demand, and therefore expensive.

Yours sincerely, MARTIN LEITH Director The Centre for Large Group Interventions Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. (Fax: 0171-293 2856; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) and include a daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

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PROFILE: Martin Burt

No sign of panic down on the farm

How has the cattle industry been coping this week? Peter Popham looks through one farmer's eyes

After a week like the one just gone, even a character as phlegmatic as Martin Burt, North Yorkshire livestock farmer, is getting a little rattled. Each day brings news of more schools giving up beef and experts declaring their anxieties: yesterday it was announced that beef prices in some markets had plummeted by about £50 an animal, down more than 11 per cent on last week.

Mr Burt is at once both an ordinary and an eminent figure in livestock farming. His 250-acre farm amid the wild beauty of Glaisdale in the North Yorkshire Moors is "small to medium", as he puts it, on a par with hundreds of others around the country. But his concern for the welfare of the industry has propelled him to the forefront of its deliberative bodies: he is chairman of the National Farmers Union's livestock committee and the union's beef farming representative on the board of Farm Assured British Beef and

fell 20 per cent and consumption levels have only recently recovered. Resurgence of BSE-related fears among the public gives him "frustration and annoyance," he says, "the same as many other farmers. The media's been harping on about BSE with a very slanted point of view. The other side isn't getting put."

The "other side" is what farmers have been reiterating since the ban in November 1989 on use of "specified offal" - bits of cattle including brain and spinal cord - in products for human consumption. "Since the offal ban," Burt says, "if procedures are carried out correctly in the slaughterhouse, there is no risk. I have no doubt whatsoever that beef is perfectly safe and nutritious."

Yet widespread public doubts remain. Meanwhile, research into the problem limps from year to year, and in his recent budget, Ken Clarke announced that the Neorophthogenesis Unit in Edinburgh, one of the key research bodies, is to have its funding cut. "We've got to pump money into these people who know, to get them to come up with results as fast as possible," Burt says, with some frustration. "It



Martin Burt with his cattle: 'You get to know them as individuals'

Richard Rayner/North News

farms before going to agricultural college. "I suppose farming's in the blood," he says. "It missed a couple of generations, now it's coming out in me." In 1967, he bought for £16,500 the farm where he and his family - a daughter and triplet boys - still live.

Today, that farm is worth more than £250,000. Much else has

family butcher shops; now the livestock industry, worth about £10 billion per year, is dominated by the big supermarket chains. Nationwide, the amount of land devoted to beef farming may have shrunk by 20 per cent since the war, but from that reduced land and a much smaller workforce, 25 per cent more beef cows are produced.

"The animals are bigger and better quality, too," says Burt. Beef sales last year generated £1.86 billion and exports £500 million.

With his 60 head of beef and 90 of dairy cattle, Burt represents a tiny but typical fraction of this industry. Last year, there were 73,600 beef cows and 46,200 dairy cow holdings in the country, with nearly 12 million cattle and calves among them. The industry employs about 100,000 people - a vast reduction over the past 50 years; Mr Burt and his two assistants (one part time) account for three of them.

When BSE first appeared, in 1986, it was "just something we heard about in the media, like anyone else," he says. "I just hoped it wouldn't affect my herd, or anyone else's."

The agent believed to have caused it, the sheep brain disease scrapie,

got into the feed that farmers fed to dairy cattle. The fact that this feed contained fragments of both sheep and cow flesh didn't bother Mr Burt. "At the time, it was seen as an extremely cheap and nutritious form of feed. Nobody thought there was anything wrong with it."

"The government predicted the number of cattle with BSE would fall after the government banned the feed, and eventually it did. It's been a slow decline though - many farmers had hundreds of tons of feed in storage when the ban was introduced, and they weren't going to throw it all away."

As numbers began falling last year, Mr Burt began to breathe easier. He has had BSE on his farm, like most dairy farmers and 15 per cent of beef farmers - "three or four cases in the past three or four years," he says.

This weekend, the Burts will sit down to their customary beef joint without a quail; next week, they will eat beefburgers as usual. Mr Burt knows what he's doing. "You get used to your cows when you spend all day with them, you know them as individuals, almost by name." He enjoys a degree of certainty the rest of us can only crave.

'The media has been harping on about BSE with a very slanted point of view. The other side isn't getting put'

Lamb, an organisation dedicated to raising the standards of meat sold in shops. Why bother with such tasks? "I'd like them to be able to put on my tombstone that the industry was safe in my hands," he says.

As far as Mr Burt is concerned, the Armaghion of industry meltdown is still a subject reserved for nightmares, not for sober daytime contemplation. "There is concern, but not panic. The last thing we want is panic." But five years ago, during the last BSE scare, demand for beef

would be irresponsible to starve them of funds. If the government want to put their money where their mouth is, they should fund them to the full. We've got to get an answer to this, and the only way is to keep the research going."

Martin Burt was brought up in the Yorkshire Dales, near where he farms today. He went to Stonehurst public school, but decided early that he wanted to farm. He left school after O-levels and spent three years' labouring on nearby

changed, too. Before the BSE problem crashed down on them, the biggest challenge Britain's cattle farmers faced was EU bureaucracy and quotas. "In 1984, milk quotas were introduced. Since then, we've had quotas on beef and sheep, too; everything now has a lid on it. As a result, everything we produce must be of the highest quality," says Burt.

That tendency has been reinforced by a sea change in the market. When Mr Burt started out, his market consisted of hundreds of

Nobel poet shaped by contradictions

Fintan O'Toole offers an eve-of-ceremony tribute to Seamus Heaney

Meeting Bill Clinton in Dublin last week, and listening to the US President quote him in virtually every speech he gave, Seamus Heaney must have had mixed feelings. He himself has quoted with approval a message the American poet Robert Lowell sent to Lyndon Johnson, turning down a request to read at the White House. "Every serious artist knows that he cannot enjoy public celebration without making subtle public commitments."

In an artistic life marked by an increasing volume of public celebration, culminating with his acceptance of the Nobel Prize for Literature tomorrow, Seamus Heaney has also tried to avoid subtle political commitments.

He is not an unpolitical writer. On the contrary, when Heaney and others began to write poetry in Belfast in the early Sixties, it was a deeply political act. They believed, as Heaney later recalled, "that the tolerances and subtleties of their art were precisely what they had to set against the repetitive intolerance of public life."

His poetry is not a shunning of politics, but a corrective to it. By seeking out the subtlety that is always hidden in words, he has delivered a rebuke to the dangerous clichés of so much public language. One of the reasons he is so often quoted by politicians on big, symbolic occasions is that the generosity of his language supplies something that has been patently absent in most political speech.

It is easy, of course, for writers who don't really feel the tug of a commitment to their own tribe to steer clear of narrow political identifications. But in Heaney's case, everything about him is saturated in a visceral sense of belonging. His imagination is deeply territorial, utterly rooted in a sense of place. His work has returned again and again to his childhood in County Derry, a place, like all places in Northern Ireland, imbued with politics.

As a young Catholic, Seamus Heaney suffered the usual harassment from the exclusively Protestant special constabulary. Even though his family was not politicised, his "country of community", as he put it, "was also a place of division", wherein the very names of fields and townlands, some Scots, some Irish, gave the game away: "the lines of sectarian antagonism followed the boundaries of the land".

A poet in thrall to that landscape could have slipped easily and naturally into the role of cultural spokesman for an embattled tribe. The pressure to do just that weighs heavily on his work. The tension between his gift and the dark, dangerous terrain over which it has often had to move is what has made his poetry so powerful.

His basic politics are not very different from those of most Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland. He famously objected to being included in the *Penguin Book of British Verse*, sending a poetic open letter to the editors:

*My passport's green.
No glass of ours was ever raised*

To toast the Queen.
But he writes, of course, in English. Almost as much as he is a poet of Irish experience, Heaney is a poet of English traditions, a successor to Milton.



Heaney: at heart an Irish nationalist

Wordsworth and Hopkins. And every time he writes, he acknowledges, in the very act, what he calls the "double reality" of Ireland and Britain.

That he has made something wonderful from this contradiction holds out the hope that living in a double reality, as Northern Ireland must learn to do, can be rich and rewarding instead of nightmarish and terrifying.

Some time ago, Heaney expressed the desire to "make things up more, to transform things more... to change what's there. I would like to be able to put things through myself and make them different. I would like to be freer." So, too, would the vast majority of Irish people, North and South. The job of politics is to get to a point where politicians don't have to rely on quotes from Seamus Heaney when they want to articulate that aspiration.

The writer is a columnist with the 'Irish Times'.

It's official: stress can damage your health

First it was said to cause heart attacks. Now it's cancer. Liz Hunt looks at the making of a modern disease

The link between breast cancer and stress reported this week by a team of British doctors and psychologists has significance beyond its clinical conclusion. Previous studies have hinted that major traumas such as bereavement, redundancy or divorce, are associated with the disease but the latest evidence, published in the *British Medical Journal* today, is the most compelling to date.

This study obliges us to place stress at the core of mainstream medicine, as a cause of ill-health. And it begs the question that if stress really does cause disease, what can doctors do about it?

Doctors do not like stress because it is difficult to treat. They prefer magic-bullet medicine, where a drug or operation will cure the disease or alleviate the symptoms. This has been a barrier for more than 50 years to their acceptance of stress as a potential trigger for a range of illnesses. Their patients, however, have recognised stress and its associated risks more readily.

Everyone has felt "stressed out" at some time or other: it was the classic Eighties' disease. And when people are under stress they know, almost intuitively, that they are more vulnerable to coughs, colds, and other infections.

This may sound like common sense, but it is only with scientific evaluation that stress will be taken seriously. Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, says: "Studies like the BMJ study can only help. What we have needed is a scientific approach to evaluating stress and, until recently, very few doctors and psychologists have worked together on this."

An Austrian physiologist, Hans Selye, working in Montreal in the Thirties, is widely regarded as the father of modern stress research. He noted that adverse stress - physical or emotional stimuli including internal conflicts, significant life events or physical violence - were risk factors for a range of illnesses in certain patients. Dr Selye hypothesised in medical journals and lectures that these forms of stress disturbed the production of certain vital hormones in the body, resulting in pathological changes to some tissues.

His work attracted some attention from fellow doctors but it was not until the changes in working practice brought about by the Second World War that stress became more widely recognised as a subject worthy of research. Long hours and extra night shifts in munitions factories and the



Stress at work has contributed to a rise in heart disease among men Paulo Macafo

aircraft industry took their toll on people's health, reflected in absenteeism and behavioural changes such as increased drinking and smoking.

In the Fifties and Sixties, the rise in heart disease among men was identified and since they then made up the bulk of the workforce, it was suggested that stress - possibly related to new technologies in the office and modernisation of manufacturing industries - might be a contributory factor. "It was a gradual dawning that something was going on here and that stress could play a part," Professor Cooper says.

The real springboard for the emergence of stress as a modern disease was the work of two cardiologists in the late Sixties in San Francisco,

Dr Meyer Friedman and Dr Ray Rosenman showed a direct relationship between what they termed "type A" behaviour (ambition, aggressiveness, competitiveness, hostility, restlessness etc) and heart disease. Their eight-year study of more than 3,000 men in California concluded that those who showed type A behaviour ran twice the normal risk of developing coronary heart disease. This was comparable to the risks associated with smoking and drinking.

Their study remains controversial, since several attempts to confirm the findings have failed to do so. However, it remains a landmark in stress research, and funding for further work by the growing number of interested psychologists

and scientists was forthcoming as a result. They set out to discover if stress played a role in the development of other diseases. They had their answer when, in the Seventies, scientists at Ohio State University showed that the immune system of animals subjected to stress was compromised, and that production of white blood cells, the T-cells, which fight disease, fell.

Since then a variety of studies - some good, some dubious - have linked stress to a series of major and minor illnesses: cancer, mouth ulcers, infertility, and post-viral fatigue syndrome. Dr Selye's hypothesis is now the accepted view: that when coping with stress the body responds by increased production of certain hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, which affect heart rate, blood pressure and metabolism. However, at a certain level and under continued exposure to stress, these physiological changes affect a person's ability to cope, and possibly cause damage to vital organs. In some susceptible individuals, this may trigger disease.

Dr Tony David, a medical psychologist at the Institute of Psychiatry in London and one of the researchers involved in the new BMJ study, has postulated that treatments which directly affect the immune system, protecting it from the effects of stress, are a therapeutic option in stress-related illness. But this is many years away: hormonal treatments are another possibility, but again too little is known about their role in disease development.

Preventive action against the bad effects of stress is, then, largely up to the individual, by learning how to reduce or manage their stress levels. GPs can help by referring patients to counsellors or therapists, but those who do are the exception rather than the rule.

Alternatively, Professor Cooper sees a growing role for employers in reducing stress. Changes in the workplace throughout the Eighties and Nineties have disrupted the lives of millions. The job for life has disappeared, replaced by insecurity and short-term contracts. In the short-term at least, occupational stress will be a growing problem, reflected in poor health and absenteeism. By reducing stress levels at work or helping people cope through access to counselling, employers will be getting more out of their employees while enabling them to manage stressful events outside work more effectively. The way forward may be through the workplace rather than the surgery.

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Tom Burns



Burns: a journey of faith

Tom Burns, the Roman Catholic publisher and editor of the Catholic weekly the *Tablet* from 1967 to 1982, was an influential figure on the Catholic scene in Britain. The Catholic faith was the foundation of his life, the backdrop for everything he did. His confidence in the Church supported him when, in 1968, he had to cope with the crisis caused by the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI's encyclical reaffirming the traditional ban on contraception. No editor of the *Tablet*, Burns thought, had ever been confronted with an issue of conscience and policy so grave.

Burns was born in Chile, in 1906, the seventh of nine children. His father was a Scottish businessman, his mother a Chilean of mixed English and Basque descent. The family settled in London. Burns was educated by the Jesuits, first at Wimbledon College, and then at Stonyhurst as one of the special charges of the brilliant and formidable Martin D'Arcy. He went on not to university but to

Paris, where he threw himself into the world of the Catholic revival.

Back in London, Burns was invited by Frank Sheed to join him in launching the new publishing house of Sheed & Ward. Tirelessly making social contacts from morning till evening with huge conviviality—Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton were among his acquaintances—Burns tackled the job with his usual energy. By 1931, in only five years, the firm had published 191 different titles. In 1936 Burns left Sheed & Ward for Longman Green, across the road in Paternoster Row. He set himself in particular to revive the Catholic list, which had become virtually defunct. One of his successes was to persuade the board at Longmans to back a visit to Mexico by Graham Greene. Out of his venture came Greene's first great novel—*The Power and the Glory* (1940). Greene never forgot, and supported Tom Burns in his turn by becoming one of the *Tablet's* trustees,

and publishing in the *Tablet* instalments of his novel *Monsignor Quixote* as it was being written. There was a friendship also, which died out of disrepair, with Evelyn Waugh.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, knowing Spain and the Spanish language, Burns found himself press attached at the Madrid embassy under Sir Samuel Hoare. His brief was to do everything possible to encourage Spain's neutrality and he found his task congenial. It was his conviction that the Spanish Civil War had been a peculiarly Spanish phenomenon; for him, that belief was confirmed when Franco kept Hitler at arm's length.

It was in 1944 that Burns married his beloved wife, Mabel, daughter of the Spanish physician, historian and liberal Gregorio Marañón. For all who knew them in their later years, Tom and Mabel were a unit: it was impossible to think of one without the other. Burns was a patriarch to the manner born, and he and Mabel with their

four children became the centre of a devoted extended family which opened its arms to all manner of visitors and guests.

After the war he became managing director of Burns & Oates, the leading Catholic publishing house originally founded by his great-uncle James Burns. Tom Burns and his colleague Douglas Woodruff, the then editor of the *Tablet*, built up a small empire, consisting of the publishing

firm (a thousand titles were added to the list) and bookshops; R. and T. Washbourne, specialists in devotional articles such as rosaries and statues of Our Lady and the saints; the biggest-selling religious weekly, the *Universe*; and the *Tablet*.

Woodruff had great influence on Burns's career, but the two men were very different. Before taking over the editorial chair of the *Tablet* in 1967, Burns had composed a memorandum of his intentions. Though couched in general terms, it caused Woodruff such alarm that there was an attempt, which came to nothing, to revoke Burns's appointment. It was clear that the *Tablet* would change. Woodruff never came to terms with the Second Vatican Council, the reforming council of the Church which met in Rome from 1962 to 1965, whereas for Burns it seemed the realisation of his dreams.

The crisis over contraception broke in 1968. Burns was clear in his opposition to the papal encyclical and despite the pres-

ures brought to bear on him, he held courageously in conscience to his opinion. He called his leading article "Crisis in the Church" and correctly forecast that it would quickly become a crisis of authority. Very large numbers of Catholics shared his standpoint and among them were those who found the *Tablet* a lifeline. He gave them hope.

The paper lost some readers and gained others. In an open letter "on loyalty" to a colonel who had cancelled his subscription, Burns wrote: "We are a very old family: we have lived together for nearly 2,000 years. But we may be still in our infancy. I believe, as Coventry Patmore said, in the Catholicism of 2,000 years hence." In that spirit, year by year, never afraid to do battle, he pushed forward his vision of a renewal of the Church from the standpoint of the "extreme centre".

His political line, however, was conservative. All his life he would have no truck with socialism and was robustly anti-Communist, abhorring the

spiritual lie at the centre of Marxism-Leninism.

In 1968 he paid a visit to Nigeria and against the stream of Catholic opinion gave wholehearted support to General Gowon in his struggle with the leader of the mainly Catholic Ibos. Deeply antagonistic to Ojukwu's cause, Burns refused to publish the letters of protest against his editorial policy.

He greatly expanded the *Tablet's* international coverage of the Church. One of his concerns was to build bridges to the Irish Catholic community; he launched an Irish supplement which continues to appear every year in the issue nearest to St Patrick's Day.

Financially, the paper was in difficulty. Part by part, the Burns and Oates Holdings empire dissolved, and eventually the *Tablet* was on its own. With characteristic optimism, Burns enlisted a group of eminent trustees, headed by the Duke of Norfolk, who became the paper's owners, and launched sev-

eral appeals for funds. This brave decision paved the way for the *Tablet* to turn the corner.

The last great event he covered as editor, before handing over the chair to me, was the visit of Pope John Paul II to Britain in 1982. This was during the Falklands war on which, again, Burns took an independent line. In his retirement he and Mabel spent increasingly long periods at their villa on the coast of Andalusia. Here he wrote his memoirs, published by Sheed & Ward under the title *The Use of Memory* (1993). They are a record of a journey of faith, of friendship and love, coming at the end through all vicissitudes to fulfillment.

John Wilkins

Thomas Ferrier Burns, journalist, publisher, born 21 April 1906; director, *Tablet Publishing Company* 1936-85; chairman, *Burns & Oates* 1948-67; Editor, the *Tablet* 1967-82; OBE 1983; married 1944 Mabel Marston (three sons, one daughter); died 8 December 1995.

Wallas Eaton

"Wal", the very common common man and voice of "Professor" Jimmy Edwards's conscience, first made his heart-cry of "Come 'ome, Jim Edwards, come back to the Buildings where you belong!" on 4 January 1949. And in one way or another he went on making this heart-felt plea right to the end, 10 years later, when the BBC's most popular radio series, *Take It From Here*, closed down. "Wal" was Wallas Eaton, a straight actor turned funny-voice man via a string of stage revues and comedies including *1066 and All That* (1947), *Sings and Arrows* (1948) and *For Amusement Only* (1958).

Eaton was born in Leicester in 1917 and educated at the Alderman Newton School. This led to Christ's College, Cambridge, where he read History and English. He made his first stage appearance in his home town at the Theatre Royal in 1936, and his London debut at the Old Vic three years later, playing the small part of the Announcer in *The Ascent of F6*. In 1940 he was the Second Priest in *Murder in the Cathedral*, which he followed with his first comedy role in *The Body Was Well Nourished*.

Eaton joined the Army in 1940 and served with distinction in the Second World War, leaving with the rank of major in command of a searchlight battery. In 1944 he appeared in *Too True To Be Good* at the Lyric

Theatre, Hammersmith. Good, if small, roles continued, including an appearance with Vivien Leigh in *The Skin of Our Teeth*, Thornton Wilder's "history of our world in comic strip", at the Phoenix in 1945. Films, however, failed to make much use of Eaton, despite a promising debut in *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1945).

Radio was still the main source of family entertainment in the Forties, and creeping up behind the poll-topping *It's That Man Again*, starring the nation's favourite funny man Tommy Handley, was a brand new post-war series entitled *Take It From Here*. Written by the new team of Frank Muir and Denis Norden, the only unoriginal thing about it was its title. (This was borrowed from a successful 1943 radio series starring Richard Haydn, the fabulous fish mimic.) The three stars were Professor Jimmy Edwards, an ebullient euphonium player, Master Dick Bentley, ageing buffoon, and the glamorous songstress Joy Nichols. Necessary character voices came from the BBC Drama Rep stalwart Wilfred Bragg, who was soon replaced by Clarence Wright, a refugee from *ITMA*. As a change from his silly salesman ("Good morning! Nice day!"), Wright played Hoppedale Harry Hickory ("Shush... I thought it was her for a minute!"). The first programme was broadcast in 1948, and when the second

series opened in 1949 the voice of Wallas Eaton was heard on the air for the first time. As Wal, Eaton brought shame to the Professor by revealing his humble roots in the Buildings, presumably Peabody's. "Come 'ome, Jim Edwards," Wal would plead, "the eyes of the Buildings is upon you! Don't desert them what reared you! Oh Jim, they're going to tear down the Buildings and make a night-club for the troops. An ENSA niterie!"

"ENSA niterie?" roared the Prof. "That's insanity!" So the gags continued. "Your Mum's being turned out without a doostep to lay 'er 'ead on! She's prostrate!" "Has she tried legal aid?" asked Edwards. "Legal aid," orangeade, methylated spirits, answered Wal. "That's why she's prostrate!"

Each series brought a fresh theme, with Wal begging Edwards to "Save the Buildings" or to go straight and marry— "Take the plunge, Jim Edwards!" From 1953 Eaton played the pub landlord to

whom Edwards as Pa Gum poured out the latest affairs of his dim son Ron (Bentley) and fiancée Eth, played by the all-purpose genius June Whitfield. Eaton's stage career now really took hold and he was cast by Joan Littlewood in *Fings Ain't What They Used To Be* (1959).

Following a promising debut for BBC Television in Arthur Askey's top-rated series *Before Your Very Eyes* (1952), Eaton's television appearances were not very frequent. He had parts in *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes*

and later in the Frankie Howard series *Up Pompeii*. In 1975 he made a trip to Australia, where he could indulge his favourite hobby of sailing. He decided to settle there—an intriguing choice considering his close involvement with Dick Bentley and Joy Nichols, both Australians who preferred to live in England.

Dennis Gifford

Wallas Eaton, actor, born Leicester 18 February 1917; died Australia 3 November 1995.

Hopper Levett

In the days when all first-class cricketers were either Gentlemen or Players a natural path to rapid advancement was to become an amateur wicket-keeper. If the major prize, an England cap, was rarely allowed to leave the professional's grasp, there were one or two amateurs good enough to slip through when the stars were injured and the selectors blinked. One such was Howard "Hopper" Levett of Kent who spent most of his career in the shadow of Leslie Ames, with Kent, and in competition with George Duckworth of Lancashire.

He would have been six when the Great War began, snatching just a glimpse of cricket's Golden Age, and was fortunate to attend Brighton College, a school with a reputation for producing cricketers and footballers, even double internationals. Sammy Woods had preceded him and even in such formative years Levett was described as "a genuine character in the true sense of that much abused word".

He made his debut for Kent when 22 and continued playing until 1947 as very much the specialist wicket-keeper, averaging

only 12 with the bat but recording 467 dismissals, of which 195 were stumpings. He made the first of his four appearances for the Gentlemen at Lord's in 1931 and toured India with MCC in 1933-4 at a time when trips to the subcontinent were much more amateur than professional. In his one Test, in Calcutta, he took three catches but scored only 5 and 2 not out.

However, in 1937 he was "considered to be well in the running for a trip to Australia" but, once again, Ames recovered from injury. Sir Pelham Warner still ranked him among

England's top four wicket-keepers as late as 1945.

It was said of Levett, a man of great nervous energy, a non-stop chatter behind the stumps or in the pavilion, that on one of his brilliant days he was the best in the country.

A farmer's son, he remained an honoured and admired character in Kent, that most convivial of county clubs, and was the club's president in 1974. He will be best remembered, with affection, for one of the game's classic stories. After a night of heavy entertaining, Hopper Levett took his place

behind the stumps and never even flickered as the first ball whistled by outside the off-stump for four byes.

The batsman ticked the second down the legside, Hopper took off to dive and take a spectacular catch, rising to say, beaming: "Not bad, eh, for the first ball of the morning!"

Derek Hodgson

William Howard Vincent Levett, cricketer, born Goudhurst, Kent 25 January 1908; married 1943 Pamela Goodhead (deceased; one child deceased); died 30 November 1995.



Levett: 'Not bad, eh?' Photograph: Coloursport

Stan Smith



Smith: 'Missing, believed killed'

Like his uncle, a member of the 11th Hussars who survived the Charge of the Light Brigade, Stan Smith was himself a survivor—and the last survivor of the "Black Hole of Baku". The story of this appalling incident was not given much publicity, but it bears comparison with the worst atrocities endured by prisoners of the Japanese in the Second World War.

Smith was one of 28 volunteers under Commander Bruce Fraser sent to Ismail, a port on the Caspian Sea, just after the First World War, in an attempt to prevent the advance of the Bolshevik revolution into Georgia. The whole party was captured and incarcerated in two small earth-floored cells. They were forced to witness atrocities beyond the imagination of any but the depraved. Men and women were disembowelled and mutilated in front of the naval party and then shot.

They had been reported "Missing, believed killed"; they were starving, lousy and in rags. There had been death in the cells, where bodies were left to decompose. Eventually, after almost two years, Fraser was able to get a concealed message to the British ambassador, carried out by his Georgian interpreter. Out of the 28 fit volunteers, only 14 survived and two of these died on the hospital boat home.

At the beginning of the war Smith had enrolled as a 15-year-old in the Royal Navy. At the Battle of Jutland in 1916, he was a gun-layer in the destroyer HMS *Spitfire* when, during a torpedo attack on an enemy battleship, he was the only survivor of his gun's crew: his ship was hit several times, and he was badly wounded himself.

After recovering from a serious leg wound, Smith volunteered to join one of the "Q-ships"—old merchant ships with concealed guns. After fitting out, Q-12, the first Q-ship, left harbour to swing compasses and was promptly torpedoed by one of the U-boats she was intended to combat. On-board the second Q-ship, Smith and his gun's crew faced a submarine's shelling until it came close enough to be itself sunk. Smith's peacetime career saw him join a naval party search-

ing for the lost Colonel Fawcett in the upper Amazon jungle, pirate hunting near Hong Kong, and four years' adventures on the China station, as well as a long commission based in Bermuda. Smith's memoirs, *Sea of Memories* (1985), read like yarns from *Boy's Own*.

Pensioned in 1939, Smith was recalled within a few weeks of his discharge, at the outbreak of the Second World War. With the rank of Chief Petty Officer he found himself second-in-command of the gunnery training ranges at Sheerness; his batteries defended the Thames estuary and he was frequently under direct air-attack. Smith was responsible for the construction of one of the first Commando Training Courses, as Chief Gunnery Instructor. He was retired a second time at the end of hostilities.

Stan Smith maintained correspondence with his former commander, Bruce Fraser. They were the last two survivors of the "Black Hole of Baku". Smith, by then in a wheelchair, was the guest of the Royal Navy in 1990 when the Duke of Edinburgh unveiled a bust of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fraser of North Cape in Portsmouth Dockyard. The Duke accepted a copy of Smith's autobiography and Smith was presented with the Union Flag which had held the statue.

Geoffrey Kemble Johnson

William Stanley Smith, naval officer, born Beccles, Suffolk 23 March 1899; married 1936 Laura Flowerdew (two sons, one daughter); died Beccles 30 November 1995.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

ROSS: On 3 December, to Sara and Alex, a beautiful 9lb 3oz son, Thomas William. Thanks to all at Greenwich Hospital.

THORNES: Susan (née Hawthorne) and Andrew are delighted to announce the birth of their son Timothy Lindsay on 1 December 1995—a brother for Melissa.

IN MEMORIAM

PIPER: John Andrew, died 9 December 1989. Thinking of you today, as every day. Loving you and missing you, Mary.

Announcements for GAZETTE, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notice, notices, notices, notices, notices) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line (VAT extra). They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Changing of the Guard

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am. 1st Battalion The Queen's Lancashire Regiment mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. Band provided by the Welsh Guards.

Birthdays

TODAY: Miss Joan Armatrading, singer, 45; Viscount Bearsted, banker, 86; Sir Nicholas Bonsor MP, 53; Mr Billy Bremner, former Scottish footballer, 53; Mr Beau Bridges, actor, 54; Sir Stanley Brown, former chairman, CEBG, 85; Sir John Burgh, President, Trinity College, Oxford, 70; Dame Judi Dench, actress, 61; Mr Kirk Douglas, actor, 78; Mr Douglas Fairbanks Jr, actor, 86; Miss Dawn Freedman, circuit judge, 53; Mr Benny Green, musician, writer and broadcaster, 68; Mr Geoffrey Haskins, former chairman, Fitch Lovell, 69; Mr Robert Hawke, former prime minister of Australia, 66; Professor Gabriel Horn, Master, Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, 68; Dr Lionel Kopelowitz, former President, Board of Deputies of British Jews, 69; Mr Ian McIntyre, writer and broadcaster, 64; Sir Michael Mann, a Lord Justice of Appeal, 65; Mr Donny Osmond, singer, 38; Miss Isabel Poole, Sheriff of the Lothian and Borders, 54; Lord Roes QC, former MP and Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 69; Mr David Ridsdale, disc jockey, 55; Dame Elisabeth Sharrer, opera singer, 80; Sir Peter Smithers, former MP, 82; Miss Rita Stephen, trade union leader, 70; Miss Joanna Trollope, author, 52.

TOMORROW: Sir Scott Baker, High Court judge, 58; Mr John Birt, Director-General of the BBC, 51; Viscount Boyle, Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire, 64; Mr Kenneth Brannagh, actor, 35; Mr Harry Cohen MP, 46; Sir John Collins, chief executive, Vesey Group, 54; Professor Barry Cluff, archaeologist, 56; Miss Rumer Godden, playwright, poet and author, 88; Mr Morton Gould, composer and conductor, 72; Mr Cecil Harcourt-Smith, 1st Baronet, AEU, 96; Lord Harris of High Cross, founder President, Institute of Economic Affairs, 71; Mr

Michael Jopling MP, 65; Miss Joan Kennedy, Principal, St Mary's College, Durham, 62; Mr Jonathan Khan, squash champion, 32; Mr Nicolas Kynaston, concert organiser, 54; Miss Dorothy Lamour, actress, 81; Mr James MacAdam, chairman, Signet Group, 65; Mr Raphael Maklouf, sculptor, 58; Mr Michael Marley, former prime minister of Jamaica, 71; Sir Jeremy Morse, former chairman of Lloyds Bank, 67; Sir John Peel, former surgeon-gynaecologist to the Queen, 91; Mr Raymond Pinner, former President and Honorary Director of the Design and Industries Association, 79; Sir Angus Stirling, Director-general, National Trust, and chairman, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, 65; Mr Chad Stuart, rock singer, 52; Mr Colin Turner, former Rector, Glasgow Academy, 62; Mr Michael Wright, writer, 59.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births John Milton, poet, 1608; Joel Chandler Harris, author and creator of "Uncle Remus", 1848; Clarence Birdseye, inventor of the deep-freezing process, 1886; Hermione Ferdinand Gimgold, actress, 1898; Deshaun Malcolm IV, King of Scotland, 1160; Sir Anthony Van Dyck, painter, 1644; Dame Edith Sitwell, author and poet, 1904. On this day the first execution took place in Newgate Prison, London, 1783; the first episode of *Coronation Street* was televised, 1960; Lech Walesa was elected President of Poland, 1990. Today is the Feast Day of St Badoc or Beuzec, St Gordana, St Leonidia, St Peter Fourier and The Seven Martyrs of Samosata.

TOMORROW: Births César-Auguste Franck, composer, 1822; Emily Elizabeth Dickinson, poet, 1830; Ernest Howard Shepard, illustrator of *Where the Wild Things Are*, 1879; Mary Pearson Norton, children's author, 1903. Deaths Paolo Uccello (Paolo di

Dono), painter, 1475; Alfred Bernhard Nobel, industrialist and philanthropist, 1896; Charles Renée Mackintosh, architect and painter, 1928; Luigi Pirandello, playwright and novelist, 1936; Alfred Damon Runyon, writer, 1946. On this day: the Gregorian calendar was adopted in France, 1582; the first Nobel Prizes were awarded, 1901; Piccadilly underground station was opened in London, 1928; King Edward VIII abdicated, and became Duke of Windsor, 1936; the UN General Assembly issued the Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St Edmund Gerhards, St Eulalia of Merida, St Eustace White, St Gregory III, pope, St John Roberts, St John Manners, St Melchisedech and St Polydore Pladen and St Swithin Wells.

Lectures

NATIONAL Gallery: Lynda Stephens, "Gold (III): Giovanni del Ponte, The Ascension of Saint John the Evangelist, with Saints", 12pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Nick Barnard, "Hindu Art: the major dates", 2.30pm. Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "William Blake's Scale of Achievement", 1pm.

Luncheons

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Mr Malcolm Rifkind QC MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, hosted a luncheon held yesterday at 1 Carlton Gardens, London SW1, in honour of Mr Yohji Kono, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Church leaders who let their audience nod

faith & reason

The Archbishop of Canterbury and the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches could learn from newspapers, suggests Paul Handley, Editor of the *Church Times*.

Jesus had been talking to the crowd for a while. "Master," said his disciples, "it's getting late. Send the people away so they can buy something to eat." Instead came the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and, though the Gospels don't say so, Jesus could presumably carry on talking. Since that day, church leaders have assumed that boring your listeners is biblical.

Konrad Raiser, head of the World Council of Churches, was in London last week. He's worried about the WCC's image, and thinks, rightly, that it's contributing to the council's cash crisis. So he invited me, and several other members of the religious press, to an informal dinner. "We are anxious to hear about perceptions of the council's work in the UK and how you think we may be able to enhance our image and communication as we seek new sources of income to support the council's work." Well, shorter sentences or a few more commas would help.

I said as much to Cole, my news editor, when I asked him to go in my stead. (The week of the General Synod was not a good one to choose.) "Tell them to change their typeface," I suggested. "If they made it bigger, they wouldn't be able to fit as many words on their press releases, and I might begin to read them."

I had in mind their release on the Dayton agreement about Bosnia. In a modest announcement (for them), the WCC "welcomed" the peace agreement; "congratulated" the parties on reaching it; "recognised" that it was not fully secured; reminded us what they had said in September about peace having to extend to every minority; and "recommended" themselves to the peoples of Bosnia.

The release concluded: "Reconstruction

and reconciliation is, in the first instance, the task of the peoples of Bosnia. The WCC stands ready to help them in their efforts to reconstruct not only their homes, but also their communities in the spirit of peace and tolerance." Once again, we didn't report any of it; here was a chance to tell them why.

"We are anxious," said the letter of invitation, "to hear about perceptions of the council's work." So anxious, that Konrad Raiser stood up and talked for 40 minutes. At a dinner which started at 7.30pm, questions weren't taken till nearly 10. Cole got up and left.

It's probably just the effect of the General Synod, but I'm less tolerant of verbiage than usual. Generally, I accept it as an occupational hazard. I accept that religious leaders are constantly trying to describe the indescribable, but sometimes I wish they would admit defeat sooner.

So I reacted badly to a recent lecture given by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The press is often criticised for being selective; here, unexpurgated and unad-

tered (oh, all right, with a few interpolations) is a paragraph from that lecture, chosen at random. We sneak into the church halfway through the lecture.

Any such theology must begin with God's presence in the Church. [Platitude.] We are here as the body of Christ, our task is to witness to his love for the world shown in Christ. [Platitude, slightly garbled.] The Church, therefore, should always aim to be present seven days a week in our communities, reaching out in faith and hope. [Another platitude, indicating we are on autopilot here.] That suggests that we must be prepared to look at our resources, not with eyes eager to maintain what we have cherished in the past, but with eyes eager for mission. [Aha, making a bit of a point here. Still, mustn't alarm the listeners, so...] In saying that, I am still convinced in [sic] the power of worship to draw people to God and of effective preaching as a tool for teaching and evangelism. [There—have we gone far enough back? But I—advancing again, more cautiously this time] we must respond to the fact that, if indeed it was ever the case [qualification] that church worship and preaching on its own [qualification] can no longer be treated as the entire [yet another qualification] arena for mission and service. [Back, more or less, to where we started.]

It is unfair to single out these two. Most church leaders, aside perhaps from the Pope, are so busy looking over their shoulders, terrified of offending one constituency or another, that they fail to notice their audience nodding. But that is why they so seldom get reported. Newspapers have to be more careful—if we bore our readers, they stop subscribing. Konrad Raiser and George Carey, take note.

Foreign Exchange Rates

STERLING		DOLLAR		D-MARK
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot
Canada	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
France	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Germany	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Italy	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Japan	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Netherlands	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Sweden	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Switzerland	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
U.K.	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
U.S.	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

OTHER SPOT RATES	
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foreign exchange rates call 0891 123 3033 Call: cost 36p per minute (cheap rate) 48p other times

£ Buys		£ Buys		£ Buys	
Australia(Dollars)	20700	France(Francs)	73700	New Zealand(Dollars)	22100
Austria(Schillings)	150000	Germany(Marks)	21450	Norway(Kroner)	94800

Interest Rates

Base	6.75%	Discount	250%	Prime	8.75%	Discount	150%
France		Lombard	550%	Discount	5.25%	Belgium	
Intervention	4.70%	Canada		Fed Funds	5.94%	Discount	350%

Advances	360%	Discount	475%	Repo (Ave)	891%	Lombard	4125%
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Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %	Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %
UK	8%	6.27	8%	7.46	Netherlands	9%	5.08	8%	6.03
US	5 1/2%	5.52	5 3/4%	5.71	Spain	12 1/2%	9.90	10 1/2%	10.73

Germany	3.1%	521	27%	521	Sweden	11%	622	7%	622
France	7%	601	75%	679	ECU OAT	9%	628	71%	710

Source: HSBC Markets Research Yields calculated on local basis ** Denotes new benchmark

	O'Night	7 Day	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	5 1/2 8	6 1/2 8 1/2	6 1/2 6 1/2	6 1/2 6 1/2	6 1/2 6 1/2	6 1/2 6 1/2

Dollar CDs	.	.	.	5 1/8	5 1/8	5 1/8	5 1/8	5 1/8	5 1/8
ECU Linked Dep	.	.	.	5 1/4	5 1/4	5 1/4	5 1/4	5 1/4	5 1/4

Contract	Settlement price	High/Low for day	EstConts traded	Open interest
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Italian Bond	(Mar 98)	106.33	106.96	105.55	28855	47646
3M Sterling	(Dec 95)	93.52	93.54	93.51	9861	75265
	(Mar 98)	93.81	93.86	93.78	12584	83467

ECU	(Dec 95)	9482	9484	9461	508	5573
	(Mar 96)	9483	9484	9482	459	5358
Euro Sfr	(Dec 95)	9782	9783	9780	569	15473

Liffe FT-SE Index Option

December	88/4	44/11	14/32	2/76	--
January	118/29	83/45	53/65	31/95	--
February	141/50	108/58	70/79	55/109	--

Commodities

Alu	Alloy	140-25	1450-60	687	57630	-	360
Copper	A	2986-70	2670-71	7469	73075	+	6325

2012	2013-2015	2016-2017	2018	2019	2020
Sarbanes Oxley Act Exchange 2002	15305	14482	10180	Scrap volumes & change in inventory as of Friday 8 December	

Platinum	432.00	255.12	Britannia.5 oz	400	132	Sovs	80.95	50.62
Palladium	132.25	86.40	Britannia.25 oz	202	68	Nobles	405.20	255.75
Silver spot	5.28	3.43	Britannia.10 oz	80	27	Mexico 1 oz	791.40	255.85
Gold Ref.	280.20	255.12						

Cocoa		Coffee		Barley		Peppercorns		Potatoes	
LCE	£/tonne	LCE	£/tonne	LCE	£/tonne	LCE	£/tonne	ATA	£/tonne

Vol:	5,749	Vol:	7,350	Vol:	377	Vol:	20	Vol:	125
White Sugar		Raw Sugar		Freight		Wheat		Corn	
LCE	\$/cwt	LCE	\$/cwt	LCE	\$/cwt	LCE	\$/cwt	COST #	120¢ Price Contract/Unit

Aug	33310	May	759	Vol.	273	May	12400	Mar	34200-34225	34200
Vol:	927	Vol:	0	Index	160%	Vol:	769	May	345.25-345.00	345.25

Source: CME

Notes: Excess (Agricultural)

Mar	Cotton (NY)	USCott/B	85.90	Feb/Apr	Sunflower Oil	\$/bbl	68.00
Dec	Wool	Acent/kg	693.0	Feb	Rapeseed Oil	FL/100kg	91.75
Jan	Butter	lb/100lb	21.0	Dec/Jan	Canola Oil	\$/bbl	65.0

Brnt Crude	(\$/bbl)	Gas-oil	(\$/tonne)	WTI	Products ;	(\$/tonne)
IPE	5.30pm	*chg Yr ago	IPE	close	*chg	6pm Spot OF North West Europe

Vol: 38,256	Index: 17.58	Vol: 22,712	Apr 1980	Heavy Fuel Oil	102/104
-------------	--------------	-------------	----------	----------------	---------

Index	1970=100	193.38	-0.01	183.68	+5.29	172.68	+11.99
Agricultural	1970=100	275.65	-0.38	273.47	-0.80	240.93	+14.41

Source: Goldman, Sachs & Co. *GSCI is a trademark and servicemark of Goldman, Sachs & Co. †Close as of 7 Dec '95

Stock	Bid	Mid	Offer	Stock	Bid	Mid	Offer
Abbey Life Managed St	7177		7555	London Life Mixed	848.70		

Account Name	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Albany Multiple Investments	1028	1660	N&P Managed	1015	1702
Allied Quantum Investments	1265.0	1262.5	Northwest Growth Managed	1279	1345
AFLA F&I Balanced \$6	7936	8311	NFU Mutual Blend	1768	1804

Black Horse Inv. Svc.	63,000	54,270	Peri Managed	3,500	3,900
Black Horse Managed Inv Svc	53,184	56,193	Peri Managed Gross	9,000	9,000
Brubaker	39.4	39.2	Peri Money Fund	77.5	184.8
Clayton Med Est Services	26.5	27.2	Procedural Medical Managed	525.0	5,528.6

Commission Manager S2	1220	675.2	Network Manager	452.7	76.1
Council Manager A	1010	1063.0	Royal Hort Op income Dist	236.3	24.8
Crown Manager	64.5	678.7	Royal Life Manager	425.9	64.3
City Council Management	1390	455.2	Royal Scottish Growth Manager	197.2	39.8

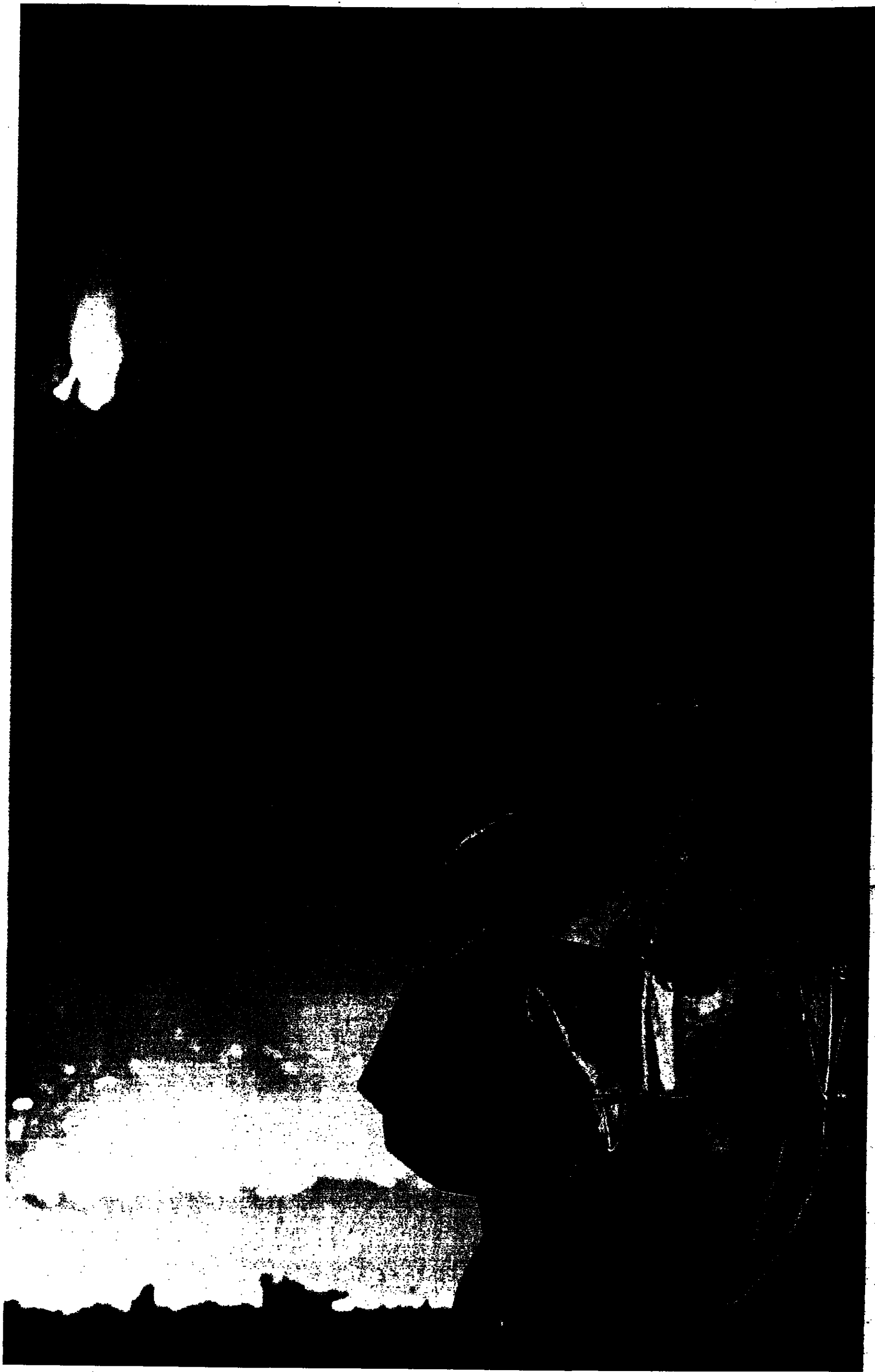
FP GMA Vancouver Manager	8002	5738	Scottish Life Manager	3778	2344
Friends Prov. Manager	3349	3526	Scottish Mutual Growth	3569	2705
GMA Manager	2008	3428	Scottish Prov. Ass. Bel Gth Mgr	8841	9406

Gen Mktg Ser 21	237.2	3,923	Standard Pk Managed	2,875	7,408
Gen Perpetual	240.9	2,748	Standard Pk Managed	2,525	2,668
GFE U.S. Managed	236.0	774.7	Standard Equity	1,146.2	1,286.6
Hambro Assured Managed	184.6	164.3	Standard 1/2 the Managed	791.0	832.7

Irish Life Global Managed	53.2	87.5	Sun Life Managed	39.2	70.2
J.F. Rothchild M&G Managed	15.8	92.9	Sun Life-Can Managed	42.2	66.6
J.F. Rothchild Soc Amv Managed	14.9	83.6	Teachers Managed	39.2	66.5
J.F. Rothchild Soc Amv Managed	14.9	83.6	Teachers Managed	39.2	66.5

Liberty Select Security A	5603	5898	Windsor Gresham Managed S3	7895	8118
Lincoln Nat Anglen	1675	1763	Windsor Investor Units	3639	3830
Lincoln Nat Managed S	5029	5285	Windsor Fund Key Managed	7767	8007

— *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997, 278:1025-1026



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Solutions for a small planet

مكتبة الامم

Market Report: What ne
appears over Grid sale
Washire calls in Bond

MARKET SUMMA
STOCK MARKET

MAIN STOCK CHANGES

INTEREST RATES

CURRENCY

OTHER INDICATORS

IN BRIEF

tesco shoppers

US victory on Zantac

societies expand horizons

great shake-up at Cray

fail to meet deadline

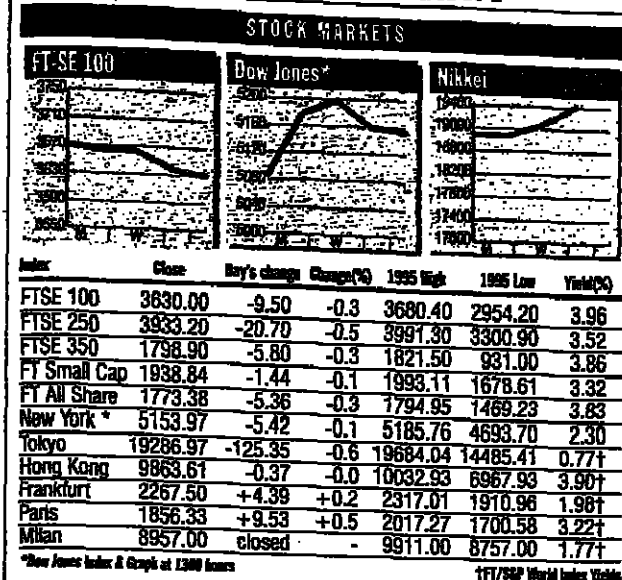
turns to outdoor advert

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CITY & BUSINESS EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

INDEPENDENT • Saturday 9 December 1995
 BUSINESS NEWS DESK: tel 0171-293 2530 fax 0171-293 2098

MARKET SUMMARY



MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Index	Price	Change	% Change
FTSE 100	3830.00	-9.50	-0.3
FTSE 250	3933.20	-20.70	-0.5
FTSE 350	1798.90	-5.80	-0.3
FT All Share	1938.84	-1.44	-0.1
New York	5153.97	-5.42	-0.1
Tokyo	19286.97	-125.35	-0.6
Hong Kong	9863.61	-0.37	-0.0
Frankfurt	2267.50	+4.38	+0.2
Paris	1856.33	+9.53	+0.5
Milan	8957.00	-99.11	-1.1

INTEREST RATES

Instrument	Rate
Short sterling	5.75
UK medium gilt	7.00
US long bond	7.87

CURRENCIES

Currency	Rate
£/\$	1.5274
£/DM	1.6273
£/¥	162.73

OTHER INDICATORS

Indicator	Value
Oil Brent \$	17.73
Gold \$	389.70
Gold £	255.14

IN BRIEF

Topic	Summary
Asda woos Tesco shoppers	British supermarket Asda moved to test the loyalty of rival Tesco shoppers by offering them vouchers at seven of its stores.
Glaxo wins US victory on Zantac	Zantac, Glaxo Wellcome's best-selling anti-ulcer drug, will retain an additional 18 months of patent protection following the defeat of proposals to close a legal loophole in the US Senate.

Building societies expand horizons
 The Government yesterday introduced new measures that include allowing building societies to diversify. In future they will be allowed to own an insurance company which underwrites personal lines insurance. Other measures include enabling a society to provide for a more "user-friendly" presentation of financial information to members and allowing societies to lend gilt-edged securities to other counterparties and not only to Stock Exchange money brokers.

Management shake-up at Cray
 Roger Holland is expected to step down as chairman of Cray Electronics next week when the troubled data communications group announces worse-than-expected interim results. Sources close to the company say the losses after taking into account exceptional charges for stock write-down will be more than £10m. Mr Holland was widely blamed for failing to warn shareholders about last year's losses of £835,000 - at the time of the group's interim results. He is likely to be replaced by Alec Daley, who was brought on to the board in October.

Life firms 'fail to meet deadline'
 Most UK life companies will not meet the regulatory deadline of December this year for the Pension Review of opt-outs and transfers set by the Securities and Investments Board, according to a survey by Touche Ross. The accountancy firm said: "While life offices are putting significant effort into the review, it is now clear that the process is much more complex than originally envisaged. This complexity is extending the timescales and the speed with which many policyholders will have their policies reviewed."

Media group turns to outdoor advertising
 The Irish Independent media group has set up a joint venture company with the French media and communications group, Havas, to supply a new form of outdoor advertising, initially in France but eventually elsewhere. The new company, in which the two groups will have a 50/50 stake, combines affiliates of the two groups, Sirocco and Avenir, and will be called Sirocco International. It will be headed by the general director of Avenir, Philippe Santini, the general director of Sirocco, Bernard Plot, will be vice-chairman. The firm will pioneer the use of illuminated advertising boarding sites in city and suburban areas.

Sultan 'offers £300m' for top hotel as Forte fights back

JOHN SHEPHERD

The Sultan of Brunei, the world's richest man, is understood to have made a £300m offer to buy Forte's prestigious Grosvenor House hotel in London's exclusive Park Lane. The Sultan already owns the Dorchester hotel in London, which makes profits of around £15m a year.

Selling the Grosvenor could damage Granada's front-line £3.3bn takeover assault on the country's largest hotels operator. At a stroke it would erase almost a quarter of Forte's £1.3bn mountain of debts.

Investors yesterday showed signs of concern about Granada's ability to win the fight. Granada's shares, which were just 3p shy of 700p on the eve of its bid move a fortnight ago, dropped 11p to 634p. Yesterday's movement increased the

difference of Granada's cash and share terms. Forte's market price of 338.5p, up 0.5p, is now 12.8p above the value of the bid terms, compared with 9.3p at the close of dealings on Thursday.

One dealer said that an unknown American client of one of the big broking houses was trying to sell up to 3 million shares in Granada. "Nobody wants them... and it will probably take him until the middle of next week before he can dump them," the dealer added.

On the Sultan's offer, industry sources said that Forte was keen to secure a management contract to run the Grosvenor if it accepts the Sultan's offer. The sources also said that Forte had simultaneously made an approach to the Sultan to manage the Dorchester. It is believed that Forte's board considered the offer at a meeting yesterday. There was widespread speculation about a possible deal with the Sultan in early summer.

Forte declined to comment on what businesses - other than the US Travelodge and White Hart hotel chains - it plans to sell. There was a broad hint in the defence document, released yesterday, that it would sell some trophy hotels. "Realising the value of significant hotel assets, whilst retaining management contracts, is fast becoming an attractive option as the hotels market strengthens," the document said.

There is additional speculation that Forte is aiming to sell three other London hotels, the Russell, George and Cavendish - which analysts calculate could fetch £125m - and four overseas. Forte also declined to comment on speculation that it was considering offers for the Wheeler's fish restaurants.

Forte's Defence

- Pre-tax profit up 46% to at least £185m before exceptional profits
- Earnings per share up 40% to at least 14.1p before exceptional profits
- London hotel revenue per available room up 14%
- UK provincial hotel revenue per available room up 7%
- International hotel revenue per available room (excluding Paris) up 9%

Hatchet job: 'New boy' Leng's plan to close 10 manufacturing sites hits shares for six

Warning by Laporte shocks City

TOM STEVENSON
 Deputy City Editor

Jim Leng's honeymoon at Laporte came to an abrupt end yesterday as the City wiped £333m off the value of Britain's second-biggest chemicals group. The company's shares tumbled 173p to 610p after Mr Leng, chief executive, only since 1 October, warned that profits would be 10 per cent down on last year and said he planned to shut 10 of Laporte's 100 manufacturing sites.

That shocked analysts who had expected a continuation of the past three years of growth in profits at the specialty chemicals group, whose brands include Evode. Forecasts of £140m were hacked back by £30m to match the company's estimate. An £85m restructuring provision will knock a further hole in the figures.

Mr Leng said: "Following the operational review, which has just been completed, I believe the core of the group is in good shape. We have a number of businesses which continue to trade strongly, although these have been unable to offset disappointing performances elsewhere in the group."

The main problem areas are the production of chemicals for the construction market, which remains depressed, and bulk polymer chemicals. Laporte's Australian and South American operations were also below expectations.



Slowdown: Jim Leng, chief executive, joined Laporte three months ago Photograph: FT

performing assets and a £5m write-off of goodwill. Despite the provision and profit warning, Mr Leng promised to maintain the full-year dividend at last year's level of 22.4p, implying a 4.6 per cent yield at yesterday's closing share price.

Mr Leng joined Laporte to replace Ken Minton, the company's previous chief executive, who moved into the non-executive chair and took on the job of sorting out Mowlem, the struggling construction company that until recently owned London City Airport.

Asbestos victory lifts T&N

MAGNUS GRIMOND

T&N, formerly Britain's biggest asbestos group, was yesterday celebrating what could be the end of massive asbestos claims overhauling the company after a US jury threw out a \$185m case brought by Chase Manhattan. The share price soared 35p to 165p yesterday, adding £185m to the company's stock market value, as both T&N and analysts heralded the outcome as a potential turning point in the asbestos litigation that has already cost £200m over the past 10 years.

On Thursday a jury in a New York court decided against Chase Manhattan Bank after it had claimed it had not been warned about the dangers of asbestos installed in its headquarters building in the city. The outcome of the case, potentially the biggest relating to property facing T&N, came a matter of hours after a \$600m claim against the company and 36 other defendants was settled for £6.5m, a fraction of earlier estimates.

Colin Hope, T&N chairman, said yesterday the group was near to seeing the end of US property claims. Asbestos-related cases and illnesses would rumble on, he believed, but the trends in the company's liabilities were becoming more controlled. "I just do think we are coming slowly and steadily down the right side of the hill."

He warned that personal health cases were and remained a much bigger problem than those linked in property.

Sandy Morris, engineering analyst at NatWest Securities, said Chase could still appeal Thursday's decision, but added T&N appeared to have won a fairly comprehensive victory.

Auditors attacked on relocation

JOHN WILLCOCK
 and ROGER TRAPP

MPs, accountancy firms and City figures yesterday criticised Price Waterhouse and Ernst & Young over their plans for relocating offshore to gain protection against negligence claims.

Adrian Martin, managing partner of BDO Stoy Hayward, which itself faces large suits over the collapses of Polly Peck and Astra, said: "It looks very tacky."

The issue has come to a head following a record £105m award for negligence on Wednesday against auditors Binder Hamlyn, whose 150 partners now face ruin. PW and Ernst will announce next week that they are registering in Jersey instead of the mainland. Under British law partners are allowed to limit their liability only if they take no part in running the business.

Matthew Carrington, Conservative member of the influential Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, said: "I think it is appalling... Auditors should be kept accountable, but the law should be changed where necessary to give them reasonable protection so they can remain in a properly regulated environment."

Prem Sikka, professor of accountancy at the University of East London, attacked PW and Ernst for their move offshore: "We need more cases like the Binder judgment. It will bring home to accountancy firms that what they do affects people. The law should be changed so that firms owe a responsibility to shareholders of the companies they audit as well."

BT in new OfTel charges dispute

MARY FAGAN
 Industrial Correspondent

A bitter row has erupted between BT and the industry watchdog, OfTel, over the amount the company should charge other companies that need to use its wires.

OfTel wants charges reduced by 35 per cent this year at a cost to BT of tens of millions of pounds but the company says the cut should be much less and attacked the regulator for trying to change the rules.

Don Cruickshank, director general of OfTel, accused BT of wrongly allocating costs in calculating what its rivals must pay. In a statement issued yesterday, he said: "Other operators ought not to have to contribute, through interconnection charges, to BT's substantial

redundancy costs, vacant accommodation, chairman's office and publicity costs [which include the costs of campaigns to win back customers from other operators]."

Mr Cruickshank said that BT's refusal to agree the relevant costs was "disappointing" but hoped to resolve the issue early in the new year. He said: "It is clear that there is a heavier burden of proof on OfTel to show why these costs should be excluded and where they should properly fall than we had previously thought."

A spokesman for BT said: "This is about whether Don Cruickshank should be free to ignore the rules in BT's licence which he finds inconvenient or not in his taste." He denied BT was trying to delay a determination of this year's charges.

Amec may pursue McAlpine link-up

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Amec, the UK contractor, may pursue further merger talks with Alfred McAlpine if it escapes a £360m bid from the Norwegian shipping group Kvaerner.

Sir Alan Cockshaw, Amec's chairman, said the logic of a link-up with McAlpine still made sense and the company would not rule out attempts to negotiate with its UK rival.

Amec yesterday produced its first detailed defence of Kvaerner's £1-a-share bid, pledging to deliver greater value for shareholders after a major overhaul of operations.

Sir Alan said Kvaerner's bid did not take into account Amec's forecast 39 per cent increase in operating profit for the

year to 31 December 1995. Takeover rules restrict Amec from making a 1996 profit forecast, though turnover for next year is put at 12 per cent. The order book stands at £2.3bn.

In a letter to shareholders published in the defence document, Peter Mason, chief executive designate, promised a detailed review of operations. "I expect that changes will need

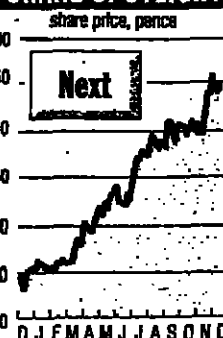
'Independent' Money on Saturday

- In the 'Weekend' section today**
- Fund managers: Dunedin wins prizes with unquoted shares 24
 - Mortgages: Critics snipe at hidden charges 25
 - Heating costs: How your home measures up 26
 - Investment: Taking a punt on Irish shares 26

DATA BANK

FT-SE 100
3,630.0 - 9.5
FT-SE 250
3,933.2 - 20.7
FT-SE 350
1,798.9 - 5.8
SEAQ VOLUME
683.7m shares,
28,460 bargains
GITS Index
96.15 + 0.12

SHARE SPLITLIGHT



Match-makers see GUS and Next as a tailor-made fit

There has for long been a feeling that Great Universal Stores and Next, the revitalised retailer, are made for each other.

The announcement this week that Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale will replace his cousin, Lord Wolfson of Marylebone, as GUS chairman in September is seen as putting at least some flesh on the bones of the merger idea.

GUS shares outperformed other blue chips, gaining 33p to 665p, a year's high. They have climbed 51p since the change at the top became known on Thursday.

The stock market view is that GUS's management, although sound, could do with a little more zip. Once highly secretive, it has adopted a more outgoing approach in recent years. Yet it is still regarded as inward looking and uncommunicative compared with most other blue chips.

Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale is chairman of Next and will remain so when he takes over at GUS, once known in the market as "Gorgeous Gussies". A merger with Next is seen as a logical extension of his Lordship's dual role.

By linking with Next he would bring on board David Jones, the company's managing director.

With Lord Wolfson, Mr Jones rescued Next, turning it into one of the country's best-performing retailers. The shares were down to the equivalent of 13.5p at Christmas five years ago. Yesterday they slipped 5p from their 449p peak.

GUS is cash-rich and could comfortably swallow the much smaller Next.

The suspicion Mr Jones would revitalise GUS, injecting the Next philosophy, is behind the strength of GUS shares. The group's interim re-



sults were at best solid with the market looking for year's figures of £596m against £560.9m. NatWest Securities reduced its rating from add to hold.

The market ended the week with the FT-SE 100 index off 9.5 points at 3,630. Shares have fallen back each day this week with Footsie down 50 points. It is the longest bear run since September last year when the index fell for seven trading days.

For a time yesterday it looked as though blue chips would end on a positive note. But New York's failure to hold early strength proved too much.

Laporte's profit warning

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

also hit sentiment. Shares of the chemical group crashed 173p to 610p, putting the dampener on other chemical counts.

But I&N, on the asbestos judgment, jumped 35p to 165p. Rolls-Royce reflected the recent run of zero engine orders, gaining 2.5p to 174.5p.

De La Rue, the security printer soon to be removed from Footsie, rose 33p to 685p and another reject, Arjo Wiggins Appleton, gained 3.5p to 162p.

Linchpin continued to fall, down 4.5p to 206.5p although on one investment yardstick, the ratio of turnover to market capitalisation, the shares look undervalued.

National Grid, due to make its first official appearance on Monday, saw a shade firmer at 209p in its when-issued form. Trading was brisk with Seaq putting turnover at 17.1 million. Charterhouse Tilley is looking for a gain of up to 15p in the first few days of trading.

Vickers, the engineering group embracing Rolls-Royce cars, held at its year's high of 280p. There is talk GKN is contemplating a bid.

Bate & Lyle improved 8p to 465p following a Merrill Lynch presentation. US support lifted Unilever 23p to 1,528p and BSKyB added 16.5p to 418.5p following plans for new TV channels. Reed International continued to fret about Internet competition, declining a further 21p to 987p.

Amstrad dropped 13p to 238.5p; the shares have fallen from 283p since chairman Alan Sugar said last week that trading was tough.

Insurance was weak on the lack of takeover action with Sun Alliance off 13p at 374p, leading the retreat.

The bio-babes were mixed with British Biotech succumbing to further profit-taking, falling 82p to 1,528p. Biotech lost 5p to 34p and Proteus 15p to 111p.

Devo International, the sausage skin maker, rose 12p to 251p as it said it would raise £31m through a placing and open offer to help pay for Teepak International, its US counterpart. Shares will be placed at 230p.

Firecrest, only a few weeks ago the Internet wonder share, fell 20p to 145p but what was thought to be bear closing helped Tadpole Technology 13p higher to 79p.

Antonov, with a revolutionary gearbox, rose 10p to 136p on talk the long awaited deal with a car maker was at last about to be clinched.

TAKING STOCK

Shares of Oliver, the struggling shoe retailer with 380 branches, lost their down-at-heel look, striding 22.5p to 63.5p. It is expected to make a £9m profit on the sale of its former head office which is to be used for retailing following Leicester City Council's decision to withdraw its objection. Oliver, headed by company doctor Denis Cassidy, is expected to suffer a trading loss of about £5m this year.

Another offbeat AIM recruit, a company called Self Sealing Systems International, which has developed a method of sealing balloons, is raising £1.06m by placing shares at 54p. Its "illustrative" projections suggest a loss of more than £1m for the current 20 months with profits next year. Behind the issue are John East & Partners and broker IA Pritchard.

SHARE PRICE DATA

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Other details: ex rights x Ex-dividend x Ex-all x Unlisted Securities Market x Suspended pp Parity Paid pm Nil Paid Shares.

THE INDEPENDENT INDEX

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FT-SE 100 - Real-time 00 Sterling Rates 04 Privatization Issues 36
UK Stock Market Report 01 Bullion Report 05 Water Shares 39
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Foreign Exchange 03 Tokyo Market 21 High Street Shares 41

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MARKET LEADERS: TOP 20 VOLUMES

Share	Volume	Value	Share	Volume	Value
BT	1,000,000	£100m	BT	1,000,000	£100m
BT	1,000,000	£100m	BT	1,000,000	£100m
BT	1,000,000	£100m	BT	1,000,000	£100m
BT	1,000,000	£100m	BT	1,000,000	£100m

FT-SE 100 INDEX HOUR BY HOUR	14.00 3636.4 down 3.1
Open	3632.1 down 7.4
09.00	3633.2 down 6.3
10.00	3630.4 down 9.1
11.00	3621.2 down 18.3
12.00	3628.8 down 12.7
13.00	3629.5 down 9.9
Close	3630.0 down 9.5

RETAILERS, FOOD	RETAILERS, GENERAL
ASDA	ASDA
ASDA	ASDA
ASDA	ASDA
ASDA	ASDA
ASDA	ASDA

TELECOMMUNICATIONS	TEXTILES & APPAREL
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT

RETAILERS, GENERAL	TOBACCO
ASDA	ASDA
ASDA	ASDA
ASDA	ASDA
ASDA	ASDA
ASDA	ASDA

TRANSPORT	SPIRITS, WINES & CIGARS
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT

SUPPORT SERVICES	WATER
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT

RIGHTS ISSUES	RECENT ISSUES
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT
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GOVERNMENT SECURITIES	INDEX-LINKED
BT	BT
BT	BT
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BT	BT
BT	BT

SHORTS	MEDIUMS
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT

LONGS	UNDATED
BT	BT
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BT	BT
BT	BT
BT	BT

GOVERNMENT SECURITIES	INDEX-LINKED
BT	BT
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BT	BT

SHORTS	MEDIUMS
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LONGS	UNDATED
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COMMENT

With Chase
Manhattan's failure to win even a dime of compensation for the asbestos that was used in its head office more than 30 years ago, T & N can safely assume that other property-related claims will now quickly fall away.

One claim down, but 80,000 still to go for T&N

Good news: T&N has won a landmark US legal ruling in its battle against asbestos-related claims. Bad news: there are at least another 80,000 claims to come. Most companies have to spend a certain amount of time dealing with overhangs from the past but at T&N, better known by its former name of Turner & Newall, dealing with the legacy of its once-pioneering wonder product is a task so great that it is almost overwhelming. This depressing, consuming, and largely thankless work has fallen on a management which had nothing to do with the company when it actually made asbestos; that belonged to a different generation.

On the whole, however, it has managed to deal with this difficult and distracting business in a professional and humane manner. Furthermore, unlike many others caught up in asbestos-related litigation, it has survived. Many of its competitors are no longer here to meet burgeoning claims for compensation. Under the guiding hand of Colin Hope, chairman, T&N has emerged better from the wreckage of asbestos than nearly all others involved in this business.

Its fault has been to raise City expectations about when we might finally see an end to the constant provisioning and legal wrangling to unrealistically high levels. A year ago last summer, the shares were on a roll, buoyed by a landmark settlement that many, including the company, thought might herald an end to the perpetual round of litigation. Not so. By chance or design T&N chose

Budget day a year ago to announce a further £100m of provisions, spread over two years, because of an "unexpected rise in claims". The shares plunged.

Hope springs eternal and Mr Hope (sorry) was yesterday once again expressing the belief that T&N has finally got the measure of the asbestos problem. Is his optimism any better founded this time round? Certainly T&N seems finally to have seen off the property-related claims. With Chase Manhattan's failure to win even a dime of compensation for the asbestos that was used in construction of its head office more than 30 years ago, T&N can safely assume that other property-related claims will now quickly fall away. The same cannot be said of health claims, where the issues are more emotive. At this juncture T&N is probably right in its assertion that provisions already made are more than adequate to meet known claims. If even a small proportion of the 80,000 refusing to join the US out-of-court settlement succeed in their claims, however, the company may be in trouble again.

Furthermore, the boundaries of litigation in this area are constantly being pushed out. The recent Armley case extended potential claimants in Britain from former employees to those living in the vicinity of the company's factories. The next logical step would be to make the company liable to all those with mesothelioma, a lung cancer caused by asbestos. The company thinks this highly unlikely but it also thought that about the

Armley case. T & N may be right. The worst could well be over. But it seems equally possible that the worst is still to come.

Sir Ronald looks for reform not revolution

Sir Bryan Nicholson, president of the SCBI, has an amusing explanation of why Sir Richard Greenbury accepted his invitation to chair the committee on top pay. The hottest seat of the year: "I called him on my car phone and you know how hard they sound - I think he thought I was inviting him to lunch."

The hot seat, or at least a very warm equivalent, is now occupied by another senior businessman, Sir Ronald Hampel, chairman of ICI. After the pay row, he can have few illusions about the chairmanship of the relaunched Cadbury Committee on corporate governance, which is to review the work of both the Greenbury and Cadbury Committees. As Sir Richard Greenbury found to his cost, the scope for misunderstandings in these areas is enormous. Sir Ronald has already experienced one.

According to the CBI, all seven organisations that set up Cadbury Mark II agreed that it was time to digest past reforms, rather than launch any grand new initiative. Before he took the chairmanship, Sir Ronald insisted on maximum flexibility in the terms of reference, so the committee could tackle

any unforeseen issues that cropped up. By insisting on a wide remit, Sir Ronald set a hare running.

Yesterday, he was distancing himself as fast as he could from suggestions that these terms of reference presaged a fundamental review of the entire corporate governance structure in the UK. If there is a quicker way than this to make himself a pariah in British boardrooms, it is hard to think of one, and Sir Ronald made clear he had proposed nothing of the sort.

He said: "I don't believe there is anything fundamentally wrong with governance in this country. The committee's remit is wide ranging. It gives an opportunity for any relevant subject to be discussed. But I don't want to give the impression that we are concentrating on any one thing or the other because I genuinely don't know."

Should Sir Ronald be so cautious about his objectives? If there is a Labour government it is certain to give the British boardroom another going over, and perhaps he should get his oar in first. One controversial question on the Labour agenda is whether there should be a board member with formal responsibility for representing outside interests such as shareholders.

Cadbury and Greenbury have promoted the role of non-executive directors as corporate policemen, acting on behalf of shareholders, but failed to acknowledge that the law makes no such distinction between different types of director. This creates a

problem at the heart of all their reforms.

One way to resolve it is the creation of a two-tier board, a Continental concept much reviled in Britain. The claimed drawbacks may be exaggerated, but so are the benefits: look at how ineffective the Phillips supervisory board was as the company drew near the brink of collapse a few years ago. Sir Ronald should certainly make one of his tasks a way of bringing shareholder representation into the boardroom in a more formal way - without all that Continental paraphernalia.

Unease at Granada's knockout power

Forté's official defence document, published yesterday, was a tame enough affair but before it rolled off the printing presses at lunchtime there were tangible signs of unease about Granada's ability to deliver a knockout higher offer sometime next month.

Granada's shares tumbled 11p to 634p while Forté firmed 0.5p to 338.5p. Those movements widened the gap between Granada's bid terms and Forté's market price from just a couple of days ago to almost 13p. More worrying still for the Granada camp is that Granada's recently declared 8p dividend will be stripped out of the price in early January. That implies an underlying price of 626p, which is only 1p above the 625p at which Lazard, Hoare Govett and BZW underwrote the bid.

Yorkshire Water: City analysts lukewarm at appointment of industry insider as new managing director

Difficult mission for Bond as water crisis grows

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Beleaguered Yorkshire Water has moved to defuse rows over water shortages and quality of service by appointing Kevin Bond, chief executive of the National Rivers Authority, as the managing director of the core business.

The appointment of Mr Bond, 45, to the £135,000 a year post follows months of adverse publicity since the drought in the middle of the year. But the move failed to impress some City analysts who had been expecting an appointment from outside the industry. One analyst said: "This is pretty neutral. The NRA is a quasi-government body and hardly the most dynamic organisation in the world."

Paul Taylor, Yorkshire regional manager for the customer service committee of the regulator, Ofwat, said: "We welcome management with an interest in water and an understanding of the issues, but I cannot comment on this individual."

Mr Taylor said that the main priority was for the company to end the long-running uncertainty for customers about the supply situation in the region. He called on Yorkshire Water not to go ahead with possible "rota cuts" which could leave some people without supplies on alternate days and which may begin in the New Year.

The appointment of a new managing director has been delayed by the difficulties the company has experienced in recent months. Tony Ward, Mr Bond's predecessor, had intended to retire in September but this has now been deferred until early next year.

Sir Gordon Jones, chairman, said: "Kevin's experience of the water industry and his understanding of the many complex issues it faces will be of great assistance to Yorkshire Water. He has a demonstrable commitment to customer service, and to environmental improvement and will be a valuable addition to the water services business and to the plc board."

The shares closed last night up 1p at 624p. The company added that the arrival of Mr Bond brings it close to the end of a restructuring which has taken place over the last two years. Recently Yorkshire appointed a new finance director: Brian Wilson, formerly with Norweb, the electricity company.

Yorkshire Water's problems were exacerbated in November when it emerged as one of several firms singled out by the watchdog, Ian Byatt, for failing to come up to scratch on some water treatment and pollution issues. Ofwat said yesterday that the appointment of Mr Bond was an issue for management but that it viewed it as "interesting".

Two weeks ago the firm dealt a further blow to its angry customers by saying that it was considering compulsory metering. At the same time it announced that it had continued to lift profits during the summer when water supplies were at risk.

Yorkshire announced a 10 per cent rise in underlying profits for the six months to September. In-



Sir Gordon Jones: Praised Bond's commitment to customers and environment Guzelian

cluding a £25m restructuring charge, which held back 1994 first half profits jumped 48 per cent in the period, from £57.2m to £99.5m. The company is likely to have to invest £75m to increase water re-

sources and stem leaking pipes. Yorkshire currently loses 26 per cent of its supplies before they reach the taps.

The problems show little sign of abating. Reservoirs which have normally regained 60 per

cent of capacity by this time of year are only 20 per cent full - as low as they have been all year. The company is moving water by road tanker to the worst-hit areas at a cost of £3m a week.

US rate cuts expected on job figures

PAUL WALLACE
Economics Editor

Fresh signs of weakness in the economy fuelled expectations that US interest rates will be cut when the Federal Reserve meets a week on Tuesday.

Modest growth in the key jobs figure signalled a weakening US economy. The sales of new homes were also much lower than had been expected.

The 30 year Treasury bond initially soared by a point on hopes of an early cut in rates but later fell back on profit-taking.

"The figures increase the pressure on the Fed to ease rates," said Gerard Lyons, economist at DKB International, suggesting that the Fed was likely to bring down rates by a quarter of a percentage point.

"They certainly support the case for an easing of monetary policy," said Mark Cliffe, international economist at HSBC Markets, "but the Fed is still concerned about the budget negotiations."

Non-farm payrolls, a keenly watched indicator of the state of the economy, certainly offered several clues of developing weakness. The increase of 166,000 was in line with market expectations, but official statisticians said 69,000 was due to

special factors. That brought the monthly increase down to around 100,000, a long way off the growth of over 200,000 seen when the economy was expanding fast. In addition, the October figure was revised down by 50,000 to 66,000.

A further sign of increasing slack in the economy was that the average weekly hours worked, a good proxy for GDP growth, dropped in October. Hourly earnings also eased and the rate of unemployment rose from 5.5 to 5.6 per cent.

Another indication of gathering economic weakness was a sharp decline in the sales of new homes, leaving them at their lowest level since May.

The main obstacle to a cut in rates is the continuing stand-off between the Clinton administration and the Republican Congress over the federal budget. This was intensified on Thursday when the administration sent Congress its own plan for balancing the budget within seven years. However, it was immediately given the thumbs down by Republican spokesmen.

A new slowdown now threatens at the end of next week when the temporary funding agreement for government spending expires.

Recs grit teeth for Grid sale tax bill

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

Regional electricity companies were bracing themselves yesterday for tens of millions of extra capital gains tax if the price of National Grid shares jumps significantly on Monday, when official trading begins.

The way was paved for the flotation when extraordinary general meetings of seven of the 12 Recs approved distribution of the companies' grid stakes to their shareholders. This means REC shareholders will own just over half the Grid when trading starts.

However, there were suggestions in the market that the opening price could be 220p or more compared with the 209p at which Grid shares closed last night on the grey market, which trades the right to buy the real paper next week.

Last night's grey market valuation of the Grid was £3.5bn, in line with the estimate made at the time of a complex tax and customer rebate deal with the Government.

Estimates of the capital gains tax bill for the Recs were based on a £3.5bn valuation but at 220p the Grid would be worth nearly £3.7bn, bringing a significant extra tax benefit for the Government. Capital gains tax is likely to be based on the value of the Grid on the first day of trading.

Directors will be able to count their stakes on Monday. Executive directors are to receive extra dividends worth £408,000 on top of shares worth £1.23m and potential option profits of another £400,000, based on the grey market price.

IN BRIEF

Devro seeks £31m for Teepak buy

Devro International, the Scottish artificial sausage skin maker, has announced a £31m placing and open offer to back the acquisition of Teepak International, a leading US maker of meat casings. The full £133m cost of Teepak will be met by a cash payment of \$46m, \$52.3m in preference shares and the remainder in new Devro ordinary shares.

The purchase follows provisional clearance of the purchase given by the US Federal Trade Commission on Tuesday. The offer for 10 placing at 230p a share is being underwritten by Charterhouse Bank.

Fuller brews up 22% profits rise

Fuller Smith & Turner, the regional brewer based in London, boosted taxable profits 22 per cent to slightly more than £5m in the half-year to 30 September. The interim dividend rises from 2.65p to 2.92p. Volume beer sales rose by 9 per cent, and by 3 per cent in Fuller's own pubs.

S&N keeps beer supply contract

Scottish & Newcastle Breweries has retained a beer supply contract for 500 of the Intreprenuer Pub Company's outlets. The contract had to be put out to tender to satisfy undertakings agreed with the Office of Fair Trading when S&N bought the Courage brewing company for £435m in the summer.

Buoyant Courts forecasts recovery

Courts, the department store group, sees "substantial" potential for recovery and expansion in the UK market. It has seen a small like-for-like improvement in results from domestic operations for the second half so far, following a poor first six months of the year. Half-way profits jumped 75 per cent to £8.87m in the six months to 1 October, while the interim dividend is lifted 5 per cent to 2.1p.

Cassell warns of slow trading

Difficulties in the UK book trade have hit the second half at Mrs Beeton cookery book publisher Cassell. Profitability is geared to Christmas trade, but underlying book sale trading is below previous expectations and Cassell said it would not exceed current forecasts. The company added that it expected 1996 to improve on this year's performance, boosted by an exclusive licence to use the Mrs Beeton brand on chilled foods.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Courts (p)	137m (124m)	8.87m (6.58m)	20.80p (11.1p)	2.1p (2p)
Green England (p)	4.47m (3.45m)	0.27m (0.34m)	13.3p (14p)	4p (3.5p)
Fuller Smith (p)	44.2m (42.8m)	5.07m (4.15m)	12.80p (11.8p)	2.92p (2.65p)
Lazard & Barclay (p)	12.4m (11.6m)	0.50m (3.28m)	1.8p (13.7p)	nil (nil)
Ramsbottom (p)	180m (128m)	0.22m (6.11m)	3.8p (12p)	nil (nil)
Sydney (p)	28.7m (20.5m)	1.75m (1.41m)	6.17p (4.75p)	1.8p (1.71p)
John Thane (p)	13.3m (12.2m)	0.31m (0.56m)	0.75p (1.5p)	1.8p (1.5p)

(p) - final (m) - interim (m) - Latest figures 12 months, comparatives nine months

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

Laporte prunes for future growth

Yesterday's 175p fall to 608p was a pretty uncompromising reaction to Laporte's profits warning. Jim Leng, chief executive since 1 October, and the cause of a surge in the share price when his appointment was announced, has had a pretty short honeymoon.

On the face of it the market is right to punish the company. Having expected profits of £140m for the year to the end of this month, expectations have had to be reworked on the basis of a promised 10 per cent fall from last year's £123.5m. An £85m provision to cover a far-reaching restructuring will knock a further substantial hole.

This, of course, is another kitchen-sink job, like NEC's earlier this week, throwing all the bad news into one announcement as only a new management can afford to do and giving the company a firm base from which to grow earnings in future. The new boss's confidence in that future was confirmed by the promise to maintain the dividend at last year's level.

What Mr Leng proposes for the company also makes eminent sense. He inherited a sprawling chemicals conglomerate, which included some great businesses but also had a smattering of non-performers, taking up their share of management time and contributing nothing in return. Stripping those out can only be good news for the group as a whole.

What the programme probably means is the closure of 10 of Laporte's 100 sites, smaller ones from which many of the best assets will be saved and moved into continuing operations. Job losses will be considerably less than the 700 a 10 per cent cut in the number of sites might suggest.

What really upset the City was the suddenness of the apparent downturn in trading at the group after an impressive set of interim figures in September. Star performers then included organic specialities, making intermediate chemicals for pharmaceuticals and peroxides for the petrochemicals industry. That division made impressive margins of 17 per cent in the first six

months and there is no sign that it is suffering the fate of the construction and bulk polymers businesses.

Electronic chemicals is another business that has the capacity to cash in on the booming semiconductor industry. Laporte's strength in the ultra-pure chemicals required for silicon chip manufacture helped the division's profits in the first half rise by over a fifth.

With those sort of returns from Laporte's good businesses, returning to a growth path should be rather easier than yesterday's share price movement suggests. Shareholders should also take comfort from the speed with which Mr Leng has moved - within nine weeks he has identified the problem areas across the group, decided on a course of action to sort them out and implemented it.

Assuming profits slip back to 1993's

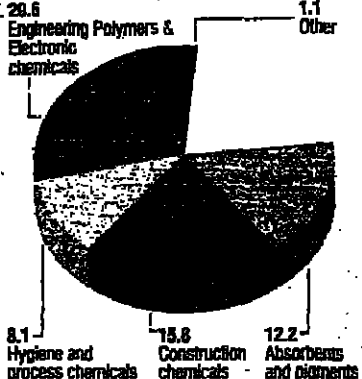
Laporte: at a glance

Market value: £1.17bn, share price 608p

Five-year record	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Turnover (£m)	649	616	608	893	978
Pre-tax profits (£m)	100.3	96.4	86.6	107.4	123.5
Earnings per share (pence)	44.9	40.0	39.2	41.4	46.1
Dividends per share (pence)	17.8	18.8	19.5	20.7	22.4

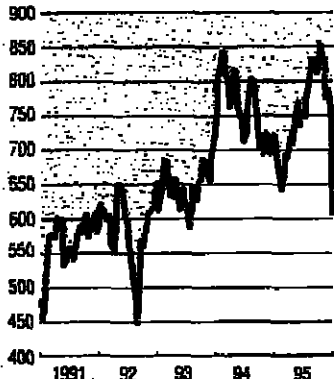
Operating profit

by activity, % (first half 1995)



Share price

pence



gearing, which stood at a heady 750 per cent just two years ago.

The proceeds from yesterday's one-for-one cash call at 48p - to raise £37.3m - will be used for the usual financial "deck-clearing" including cutting debt and a return to the dividend list next year. Quite why shareholders should think it a good idea to give a company cash so they can hand it back again taxed is hard to fathom.

That said, Ransome's debt-to-equity ratio, 402 per cent currently will fall to a more manageable 39 per cent after the fund-raising.

Preference shareholders, who are one payment behind, will be getting their outstanding £2.4m in dividends. And the company has reduced its interest bill by Barclays Bank and National Westminster Bank.

All this was yesterday backed up by a sharp recovery in pre-tax profits, which were up by more than 50 per cent to £29m for the year to end-September. No dividend is being paid, but a 0.5p interim payout for the current year is promised.

Having put the commercial side of the business in order, the management is turning its attention to the consumer operations.

But the time for fire sales is over, and some orderly disposals and cost-cutting over the next year should help drive profits.

Disconcertingly, perhaps, Ransome may use some of the rights issue capital to go back on the acquisition trail. It was, after all, Ransome's £95m purchase of an operation in the United States that caused the problems and forced a management shake-up. Investors should be wary of anything but small "bolt-on" purchases.

News of the cash call had no lasting effect on the shares, which closed unchanged at 64p.

With BZW forecasting profits of £13.9m next year, and earnings of 5p, the shares stand on a forward price/earnings ratio of 13. Fairly priced, after a stupendous run, and the rights should be taken up.

Playing chess against the commandos

Geoffrey Beattie discovers that Chris Boardman's switch to professional cycling has been a traumatic experience

At the Barcelona Olympics in 1992 Chris Boardman did something which no other Briton had managed to accomplish since 1908: he won an individual cycling gold medal. His victory in the 4,000 metres pursuit came on his revolutionary bicycle - a carbon-fibre model that virtually eliminates drag. The achievement and the bike, with its high saddle and low handlebars, made a big impression on the British public.

In 1993 Boardman went on to take the world one-hour record, riding 52.270 kilometres in 60 minutes. Then he turned professional. In his first Tour de France, he won the prologue time trial, holding the leader's yellow jersey for three days. However, he was forced to retire after 11 days, the victim of inexperience as much as fatigue and the intense heat. This year, in July, he crashed in the prologue time trial going downhill at around 50mph in the wet. He has two screws in his left ankle as a permanent reminder, but the cyclist is now fighting his way back with great resolve and determination.

But what was winning an Olympic gold really like? "A bit disappointing really, which will be a surprise answer for a lot of people. For 10 years I was aiming towards one thing, and then, in a second, it was all over. It's 'Oh, that's it. Right'. I didn't get the feeling of elation that I expected would go with it."

The bike played its part, but it was a much smaller part than people gave it credit for

It's not on television and I imagined what it would feel like, but it was more of a sensation of shock. It's something that's been enjoyable, retrospectively, over a period of time. It just sort of sinks in, as opposed to being a single moment where you stand on a podium. So I did feel rather cheated if you like, because it just didn't turn out to be like that."

A common image, and certainly my own impression of his Olympic triumph, was of the bike itself - the bit of machinery that had somehow done the trick for him. Was he unconsciously concerned that many people consider the bike synonymous with that gold?

"Not desperately. There was a lot of hype about the bike, because a lot of the media don't understand cycling - it was easy to jump on the technology side. It became christened The Superbike. It certainly looked the part. We probably wouldn't have got a fifth of the publicity without that bike. The bike played its part, but it was a much smaller part than people gave it credit for. But that was OK by me, because in cycling, the Olympic Games, oddly enough, isn't the top. In the world I work in now, of professional cycling, they wouldn't necessarily be able to tell you who'd won the Olympic pursuit, because in my sport it's just not that big a deal. The Olympics is always something special, because everyone recognises what it is. So I knew I would be going on to do other things and if I was good enough, then the common denominator of success would be myself, because I wouldn't always be on the same bike. The next year I went on to break the world hour record, which is the blue ribbon record - the four-minute mile equivalent in cycling, on a com-



Riding to greater glory: Chris Boardman on the road to recovery and facing another psychological battle

Photograph: Allsport

pletely different bike. I was the common denominator.

I suggested to Boardman that if you asked people which was the most demanding sport of all, they would probably say the marathon. But professional cycling in, for example, the Tour de France, can be compared with running a marathon every day for three weeks. Did he feel that the public failed to recognise the extreme demands of cycling?

"A marathon goes on for just over two hours and a top marathon runner may run four races a year. A professional cyclist, on the other hand, will ride on average 90 race days a year. Now, there's no other sport that does anything like that. Up to seven hours a day for three weeks in the case of the Tour de France. There's nothing else like it. I think it's quite barbaric."

Did he have an explanation for why the public, then, did not seem to appreciate the sport's demanding nature? Was it because of the technology involved?

"It's very difficult even for me to sit back at home and watch the sport going on and feel it. You cannot imagine the pain, the discomfort. You can see it, but you cannot imagine what it feels like. When somebody is climbing a mountain and they look good, it all seems to flow so naturally and it looks like a

very euphoric experience. It doesn't look hard. But when you actually feel what it's like, it's quite a shock to the system. It's difficult for people to relate to. But I would challenge anybody to show me a sport that's as hard as professional cycling."

So then, psychologically what's it really like? How does the professional cyclist remain focused?

"Some of the portions of the race are so long that you cannot physically race flat out for that amount of time. It's just not a physical possibility. Therefore there is a lot of down time within the race. In addition, it's not consistent. It's not, for example, the case that you ride fairly slow for five hours, and then for the last two hours it is really quick. It can happen anywhere in the race - somebody lights the touch paper and then sets off a series of attacks. Then you have to respond to that until it dies down, or not."

So you have to be ready throughout the race?

"Yeah, it's quite a psychological battle, because you can be riding along just having a conversation with somebody, and it flares up. Then you've got to react to it, and it can happen any time. So I would imagine it's a bit like being in a war zone where you just don't know when you're going to get attacked. It's a similar thing."

This was an interesting metaphor. But how deep was the comparison being made here? If it was really like a war zone, did that mean that afterwards riders could experience a similar kind of trauma?

"No, the trick is to survive. When I entered the professional world, I thought I was going to be surrounded by a lot of highly strung nutters. But when I thought about it afterwards, it was obvious that I was going to be wrong because to deal with this kind of lifestyle, which is so stressful and so intense, you have to be able to switch off and walk away from it."

Did he have any specific psychological techniques for switching off?

"I've worked with a sports psychologist for a number of years. He played quite a significant role in my winning at the Olympic Games, and in dealing with that amount of pressure. To go back to the Olympics, when you're sitting on the line, you're thinking 'There are 176 countries watching this live, and the next four and a half minutes can change my life completely, or not'. That's probably the most pressure that you ever get in life. At least I thought it was, until I moved on further in my career."

Boardman then said something which I found very surprising. "I actually don't like cycling. I am a nat-

ural competitor, and cycling is just the medium that I've chosen for that."

Had he always been a natural competitor? "Sadly, yes. Even as a child? Sadly, yes. It happened then as well - not to extremes, at least I hope not, but the people around me would be the best people to ask about that. I cycle because I get a tremendous amount of satisfaction from it. People very often confuse 'enjoyment' with 'satisfaction'. I don't enjoy going out in the rain and training for four hours, but I get a tremendous amount of satisfaction when I get back knowing that I've done that. I enjoy the satisfaction but I don't enjoy the exercise and it's the same with the sport itself."

How difficult was the decision to turn professional?

"It was a case of having no other option, really. There was nothing to lose. The opportunity was there, so I took that opportunity, and for the first couple of months it was very difficult. It was really difficult, it was extremely painful, unpleasant and dangerous. I was riding with 200 of the best bikes in the world and it was very much out of the pond and into the sea. I found myself, on occasion, getting left behind on a climb; a hundred guys rode away from me. This was very difficult to accept when I'd been the big fish in the little pond for a while."

And the fact that you were an Olympic champion counted for nothing? "Not in that world. The only similarity between the amateur and professional sport is that both sets of people ride bikes. The demands are completely different. You have to be a cross between a chess player, a commando and a top athlete."

Finally, we returned to the Tour de France. How was he getting over his accident? "It was an unusual

I actually don't like cycling. I'm a natural competitor and cycling is just the medium I have chosen for that

injury for a cyclist and I fractured my ankle in four or five places. I broke my wrist. That's a major limb in my sport. It meant three weeks of immobilisation and well over two months before I could train. In a way, it was great, it was a really good time off which I needed. It had been very intense for five years, and I think it has been good in career terms to step back from that and take some time out. There is no way that I would have done that, other than by being physically stopped from doing so."

It was really good to spend time with my family. When I'm with them physically, mentally I'm not necessarily there - I'm thinking about my sport and what I'm doing. But the family won't hang around and wait until I'm finished, they'll just carry on independently. It's a very big price to pay. Financially, it's rewarding to be a professional cyclist, but its very costly in personal terms. I started to question whether it was worth it, and I'd also started to go through the motions of it being my job. When you start thinking like that, then the need has started to waver. So my enforced time off has been good. I've enjoyed that time and we've used it in different ways, including looking to the future for security after cycling."

"I think," he added after a slight pause, "that my career will benefit as a result."

Geoffrey Beattie is professor of psychology at Manchester University. His series of interviews with leading sports personalities, *Head to Head*, continues with Chris Boardman on Radio 5 Live tomorrow at 8.05pm.

SPORTING DIGEST

TODAY

Football

Matches not on pools coupons:
3.0 unless stated

FA CUP: Arsenal v Tottenham

FA CUP: Arsenal v Tottenham

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Today's pools check

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SECOND DIVISION

16 Bradford City v Peterborough

17 Brentford v Bristol Rovers

18 Brighton v Bournemouth

19 Bristol City v Notts County

20 Burnley v Chesterfield

21 Crewe v Blackpool

22 Hull City v Carlisle

23 Oxford Utd v Swindon

24 Rotherham v Walsley

25 Stockport v Grimsby

26 Walsley v York

27 Walsley v Wycombe

28 Barnet v Bury

29 Bournemouth v Lincoln

30 Derby v Leicester

31 Gillingham v Chester

32 Gillingham v Chester

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Mysliv the name to remember

Racing

RICHARD EDMONDSON

The Champion Hurdle may have lost much of its lustre this week with the injury to Large Action, but it loses nothing in remembrance around Britain today. Five former winners of the championship will be remembered.

Perhaps the most popular will be the eponymous figure who parades before the Sea Pigeon Handicap Hurdle at Doncaster and then welcomes back the victor into the winners' enclosure. Sea Pigeon captured the 1979 Ebor on the flat before securing hurdling's crown for the following two seasons. He is still sprightly although rising 26.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: The Grey Monk (Cheltenham 3.10)
NB: Let's Get Lost (Doncaster 1.15)

which, in human terms, is the age when most people are consigned to the rocking chair.

Another winner is recalled in a title in Cheltenham's Bula Hurdle, which sees Morley Street on leg two of his comeback tour. In the following Triplemint Gold Cup, the chestnut's stable companion, Beech Road, continues to show there is life following near-death, six years after the screams were drawn round him and the rifle cocked in the aftermath of a fall on this course.

Even Wolverhampton recalls a former champion during Doncaster Park's Shakespearean evening (which, oddly to relate, does not have an event named after *The Winter's Tale*). The card closes with the Comedy Of Errors Handicap.

If the 1996 winner of the Champion Hurdle is lurking anywhere today it is almost certainly in the Bula, for which seven go to post, and its identity may be female.

With her Festival rivals dropping like aerosol-attended flies, Mysliv (Cheltenham 1.55) has been forced up the ante-post book and there is much to like about both her prospects this afternoon and the shape of her career overall. The mare won the Triumph Hurdle in 1994 and is still only five and almost certainly on the upgrade.

In last season's Champion she was fifth when the youngest horse in the race. The four in front were Large Action and

Danoli, who are already booking their seats in the stands for next March, plus Alderbrook and Fortune And Fame, who are both brought flowers and chocolates as often as they are oats, so much time do they spend in the infirmary.

Mysliv finished ahead of Atours and Mole Board that day and there is no reason why she should not do so again, following her pleasing reappearance at Cheltenham, where she won in the fastest time on the card.

The Triplemint Gold Cup does not contain the depth of quality of previous years, but it does feature one of the revelations of the season so far in Charlie Brooks's Coudat. Be Better. The gelding has been raised 10lb for his wide to glory in the Hennessy Gold Cup and was this week reported to be in Cantona-like form, jumping and kicking with vitality. He will need to be, as both the distance and going are now dissimilar to those which marked his finest hour. The conditions are more in line with the talents of Easy Buck (Cheltenham 2.35), who won at Newbury 24 hours before Coudat Be Better, again in a good time.

Those who hear the epithet "Gordon Richards's darling grey" today will be confused as to which horse is being identified. The Cornish trainee is represented at Cheltenham by The Grey Monk, perhaps the most exciting novice chaser unveiled this season, while at Haydock the stable's head boy, One Man (Haydock 2.00), turns out for the Tommy Whittle Chase.

One Man, like certain figures in the privatised utilities, has recently done very well for himself without achieving very much. Following a facile seasonal debut success over Jodani at Ayr, he was a short-priced favourite for the Hennessy but withdrawn on the day of the race as connections did not want to get his hair wet.

After the grey was spared this opportunity of soiling his lofty reputation, Master Oats left himself down at Chestworth and One Man was suddenly a major player in the Gold Cup ante-post lists.

It would be nice to oppose him this afternoon, but One Man meets the outclassed Well Briefed, the old gentlemen's club of Docklands Express, Garrison Savannah and Black Humour, and Monsieur Le Cure, who, in trip and going, needs nothing less than the Everglades Grand National.

CHELTEHNAME
1.55: CHIEF MINISTER, at ease on cast ground and with a new race, can cut through the depleted ranks of the Champion Hurdle hopefuls and has been here. The front-runner Mysliv and Atours both prefer more give.

2.35: Coudat Be Better seemed to excel in the Hennessy, but may not be as effective against quicker horses on this going. Unguarded Missile may also need further, but the uphill finish may exhaust Easy Buck's stamina. BIG MATT, third to Dublin Fier last time, can win this less competitive event.

3.10: St Mellion Railway, transferred to David Nicholson from Jim Old, makes his debut but will have to be exceptional to cope with THE GREY MONK.

3.45: Most of these will be ideally suited by this trip, but not all by the going. Putty Road and STRAY BEERY ANGEL, whose form behind Chiff's Song was boosted last weekend, have the strongest claims, but the transatlantic challenger may have more room to progress after that fighting ship. Runners should run prominently.

HAYDOCK
1.00: EASTHORPE, one of the most promising young chasers around, should take advantage of the 13th he receives from Swift Lane. The seven-year-old has shown his liking for a small field.



Winning habit: The Grey Monk left Brambleberry and the rest of his rivals in his wake at Ayr last month and his trainer, Gordon Richards, will be looking for more of the same today at Cheltenham. Photograph: Dan Abraham/Sporting Life

TRIPLEPRINT GOLD CUP 10-YEAR-OLD																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																									
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sport

Ginola fashions his dream of football

Ian Stafford meets the Frenchman whose skills have thrilled St James' Park

He saunters into the room, shrugging his shoulders in apology for his tardiness, cigarette dangling from two fingers, and a headscarf wrapped tightly around his head, hiding all of his dark hair except for a minor explosion bursting out of the back and down his neck.

He looks like he has just finished one of his many modelling assignments for Cerruti, and before talking he spends a couple of minutes browsing through a magazine, pausing at a section of photographs of Elizabeth Hurley. "Hm," he mutters approvingly at one photograph before flicking over the page. "Oh no, no, no," he then adds, shaking his head dramatically at another pose.

Even before he opens his mouth you do not need to be Maigret to work out that David Ginola is French. A Frenchman in Newcastle, of all places, is a man a long way from Paris, and even further from his Mediterranean roots in St Tropez. But Ginola is smiling.

In fact, the man seems to be per-

"You can feel the energy and the power of the crowd behind you. The whole ambience is crazy"

manently smiling. For not even he believed that he would have been such an instant hit in a team which has so far dominated the football season.

"It was a big decision to leave Paris and come here," he explains. "I was going to leave behind most of my family, my friends, my life and my city. It would not have been such a dilemma for me if I was going to join Milan, or Barcelona, or even a London club like Arsenal, but I knew nothing about the club or the north-east of England."

"Nobody in France could believe it. I tried to explain to them that I chose Newcastle for football reasons, that it was a big challenge for me to try and help a club, who had not won the championship for so long, to finish top, and that I wasn't coming here for the weather or the city."

In fact Ginola was not entirely sure himself. In the past four seasons at Paris St-Germain he had won medals galore, from a championship, to two French cups and a League cup, reached a European semi-final three years in succession, collected a number of caps, and had been voted the 1994 French Player of the Year. Although Kevin Keegan had sent him a video of Newcastle's goals from last season, the £2.5m signing turned up at St James' Park with a great deal of questions needing to be answered.

"I played for the French Under-21 side when we beat England 4-3 in the final of the Toulon tournament," he says, stroking his chin and leaning forward. "Although they had players like Gascoigne, Royle and Thomas in their side, they were very hard and physical, and not very technical."



David Ginola reflects on moving to Newcastle 'for football reasons, to help a club who had not won the championship for so long'

Photograph: Robert Hallam

"So when I first came here I thought the defenders would kick the ball high into the air to the centre-forward, who would then head the ball." He mimics the play from his seat, kicking his foot high in the air, and then watching the "ball" slowly descend until he heads it, putting on a bored expression to emphasise his point. "It didn't put me off, though, because I wanted to bring my idea of how the game should be played, my inner dream of football, to England."

Instead, this is nightly refreshing to hear, Ginola discovered that his presumption had been wide of the mark.

"I made a big mistake. It's all changed in the last couple of years. I think Newcastle, Liverpool, Leeds, in fact many of the Premiership clubs, now play a different game to the English game we are all used to from elsewhere in Europe."

"It used to be enough just to be physical and strong, but now the English have become much more technical. As a result, they pass the ball, which is how I like to play my football. I think the English game has learned from foreign players. I was very honoured when I read an interview with Sir Stanley

Matthews in a French football magazine. He said that he saw different things on the pitch when foreigners played in England, because they always bring a more technical side to the game, and he made a point of mentioning me."

Is that not the point, though? Have English players really improved, or is it more the case that players like Ginola, Klinsmann, Bergkamp, Juninho, Gullit, and the rest have all made the Premiership appear to be outstanding?

"No, no, this is not true," he protests. "I play with people like Peter Beardsley, Robert Lee, Les Ferdinand and Warren Barton every day, and they are all different class players. They all understand that the difference is not with their strength, but what they can do with the ball."

Well, this is all very encouraging to hear, but it only makes our disappointing show in the European club competitions this year even harder to fathom. Ginola, however, has a theory about this.

"I think the problem is no longer about the ball, or the lack of skill," the 28-year-old winger argues, stroking that Gallic chin before jabbing a finger into his forehead. "No, I think it is in the head. Ten years ago English clubs were mentally

stronger than they are now. During this time the more skilful Europeans have beaten them, and now there is much doubt in the English game. When they face a big European team, they fear them. I know that when I play against a good team I always respect them, but I never fear them."

There does not seem to be much fear about Newcastle these days, though, riding high in the Premiership and the Coca-Cola Cup, and feeding the deep hunger of a passionate following which has taken Ginola by surprise.

"I remember at the beginning of the season, when I went for a walk in a street with Les Ferdinand," he says. "People kept coming up to Les to ask him for his autograph, but nobody wanted mine. They all thought I was just a friend of his. Now it's completely different, and there are times when I wish it had stayed like it was that day with Les."

"But it is good that so many people live here for the club. There's not much else to do round here for many of them, so the club has become the most important thing for them. When you play at St James' Park, you can feel the energy and the power of the crowd behind you. The whole ambience is crazy. In France, only a small section of the

stand will shout. There is no similarity at all."

Neither, so it seems, is there any similarity in the attitude towards Ginola, arguably one of the most entertaining and skilful players in Europe, who finds himself, along with a certain Eric Cantona, out of the French international side.

He first insists it's not a big problem for him. "I don't go home and cry in front of my son about it," he said. But then he launches into the mystery of his omission. "In France a lot of people say that Ginola should play, just like they do in England about Ferdinand and Le Tissier."

"I think in the future I will play again for France, but I don't understand why he [the manager, Aimé Jacquet] won't pick me. Maybe he has a personal problem with me. It is not as though I am forgotten over here. On the contrary, I have a better image because Newcastle are doing so well, but not, it seems, with the manager."

After France played Israel last month the Israeli manager said how he couldn't believe that I was not in the French team. People like Johan Cruyff (who tried to sign him for Barcelona), Kevin Keegan, Franz Beckenbauer and Sir Stan-

ley Matthews have all said that I am a fantastic player, but maybe the French manager is better than them, non? It is the same with Cantona. We should both be in the team, but the manager disagrees. "It is the European Championship this season, and the World Cup is only two years away, in my own country. I want to play for France. I love France, I love my track, and I wear the national on my heart. I want to give my best for my country."

What, I ask, can he do to make the manager see differently. "This," Ginola announces, before preloading a strange someone. "Non, non," he adds, laughing and rocking in his seat. "I was joking. If I continue to play like I am, and Newcastle win a cup this year, then the manager must pick me for France. Otherwise, it would not be normal."

He believes his stock has risen because of his move to England. "The French people respect me more when I am in England, than when I'm back home in France. It's the same with Cantona. He's been recognised as a great player, but only since he left France. I see the French mentality. When you're doing something good, and giving a good image to your country

abroad, people say that you are great. But when Cantona made some trouble, then everyone at home said he's a shit. You don't have respect in France. But in Newcastle, you're recognised as something great."

Ginola might well have carried on with this theme had not four-year-old Andrea suddenly emerged, jumping on to his father's lap and being smothered in kisses and cuddles. It reminded him of something else.

"That is my only problem here," he said. "It is very hard for my wife, because she has no friends yet, and spends all her time on the phone to friends back in Paris. She doesn't know what to do with herself here."

"I am OK, because I take my boy to school every morning in Jeanmoulin, and then go and train with the team, but it has been very difficult for Corinne. I am building a house in the south of France, and when that is finished she will live there for four months each year. I think then she will be happy to come to Newcastle."

He then changes the topic to an upbeat mode. "Hey, but it's a small problem. I like playing for Newcastle, and I like the players. We are always laughing and joking together, and Kevin Keegan has told me that they all like me, not the

'In France a lot of people say Ginola should play, like they do in England about Ferdinand and Le Tissier'

player, but the man inside. I am not above them or apart, but one of the group. I am very happy to hear this."

Andrea is desperate to go to the toilet, so there is just time to raise the one criticism levelled at Ginola in some quarters - the Johnny Foreigner always dives accusation. He answers by lifting up his trouser legs to reveal a collection of cuts, grazes and bruises. "It's the same after every match," he said.

Defenders give the more attention, especially after a couple of weeks out after fouling me. They don't like it when I keep running past them, and sometimes, when they can't get the ball off me, they kick me down. But that's OK, I enjoy making a spectacle on the pitch."

OK, he said, but if his model legs, shorts and socks are anything to go by, "I only do that because Corinne specifically asks me, but I am always first a footballer," he replies. "Anyway, I saw a photo of a fashion shoot with Kevin Keegan in his office, so he is the same."

Tell him that his manager once made a pop record in the 1970s, something about being head over heels in love. "Non," Ginola says, suddenly looking excited. "Really?" He bursts out laughing. "I will ask him to sing it to me tomorrow."

And with that he leaps up, still chuckling to himself, and takes his now red-in-the-face boy by the hand. "What was the name of the song, again?" he asks. He leaves, repeating it to himself.

You get the feeling that if anyone can get away with asking Kevin Keegan to give a rendition of that record, it is David Ginola.

Christie looks past Arbroath

SCOTTISH FOOTBALL

Second Division Stenhousemuir take on Arbroath in the first round of the Tennent's Scottish Cup today hoping to embark upon another campaign of gantling.

A year ago they knocked out Aberdeen and St Johnstone on their way to the quarter-finals. And this season have already won the Challenge Cup. However, as their manager, Terry Christie, recognises last year's success puts pressure on them. "But we are looking forward to the competition and hope to create a good impression," he said.

Although at full-strength, Stenhousemuir have a difficult opener. Arbroath have strengthened their squad from last year with John Crawford, Steve Florence and Steve McCormick. Glasgow University and Spartans, have fought through qualifying sections to reach this stage. The Spartans manager, Sam Lynch, said: "Both of us want to progress and meet East Fife in the next round."

Stranraer wait on the fitness of Steve Kerrigan and Darren Henderson as they meet Thistle Division leaders Livingston, who will be without their Barbadian keeper Horace Stout. Albion's game against Deveronvale is postponed because of a frozen pitch.

Forest confronted by the Klinsmann factor

PHIL SHAW

Immovable object meets irresistible force in the struggle for a place in the last four of the UEFA Cup next year, yesterday's quarter-final draw having pitted Nottingham Forest's unyielding defence against Jürgen Klinsmann and the free-scoring Bayern Munich attack.

Forest, Britain's sole survivors in Europe, have not conceded a goal in five matches since losing

2-1 in Malmo in September. Bayern, in contrast, have advanced on the strength of Klinsmann's striking prowess. The former Tottenham player, for whom the second leg next March will be his first appearance in England since he left in May, has already amassed 11 goals in this season's competition, including scoring twice in Bayern's away legs against Benfica, Rakh Rovers and Lokomotiv Moscow.

He had netted four times in the first leg against Benfica in the

Olympic stadium, the Munich venue which also holds inspirational memories for Forest. In 1979, with current manager Frank Clark at left-back, they beat Malmo there to win the European Cup. Forest have won the away leg of every tie against German opposition, as well as overcoming Hamburg in Madrid to retain the premier prize in 1980.

Clark now finds himself in a battle of wits with Franz Beckenbauer, Bayern's technical director, and Otto Rehhagel, the

former Werder Bremen coach. Second in the Bundesliga, they look stronger than when Norwich knocked them out two seasons back. In Bavaria, Forest will be without the suspended Colin Cooper, who might well have marked the man Clark acknowledged as both main attraction and chief threat.

"Klinsmann's absolutely world-class, and when he came to Spurs he surprised a lot of people," he said. "We're not frightened of him, but Bayern

are much more than a one-man team." For his part, Klinsmann seemed to confuse Forest, against whom he failed to score last season, with Wimbledon. "They play the old British style with lots of high crosses into the box," he said. "They'll be a tough nut to crack."

Elsewhere in the UEFA Cup, Barcelona collide with PSV Eindhoven, conquerors of Leeds. Bordeaux, who survived while Monaco, Auxerre and Lyon fell to English clubs, tackle Milan.

The Cup-Winners' Cup draw paired the holders, Zaragoza, with their fellow Spaniards, Deportivo La Coruña.

UEFA Cup-Winners' Cup Quarter-final draw: Dynamo Moscow v Rapid Vienna; Parma v Fiorentina; Borussia Dortmund v Feyenoord. UEFA Cup Quarter-final draw: Barcelona v PSV Eindhoven; Slavia Prague v Roma; Milan v Borussia Dortmund; Nottingham Forest, (ties to be played 5 and 10 March).

English women fly the flag

LIZ SEARL

It is not often that Graham Kelly, chief executive of the Football Association, astonishes the world of football, but today will be the exception.

For at 4pm, the FA's contribution to a 24-hour round-the-world football extravaganza will kick off at Highbury, but the players it has chosen to represent England will be women.

"The Day the World Played Football" is part of the United Nations' 50th anniversary celebrations. All national associations belonging to Fifa were invited to designate matches in each of the 24 time zones to create a 24-hour ribbon of football matches occurring simultaneously around the world.

Most matches will be men-only games, but, Kelly nominated an Arsenal versus Liverpool women's match to emphasise the FA's commitment to the development of women's football, which it took over from the Women's Football Association two years ago.

"The women's game is experiencing strong growth in England, as seen by the performance of our international team in reaching the quarter-finals of this summer's Women's World Cup, and I am sure that the two teams will provide an entertaining spectacle to match the occasion," Kelly said.

If Mick McCarthy is English just because he was born here then Cliff Richard is Indian and the Duke of Wellington Irish

We've had some great moments in the last few years following the boys in green. Think of David O'Leary's spot-kick against Romania in Italia '90 or Ray Houghton's winning goals against England in Euro '88 and Italy at USA '94. What do these players have in common? Well, neither was born in Ireland. "You're really only England B," I was told by the bloke in the pub last summer.

"I've got an Irish Wolfhound, does that make me eligible to play for Ireland?" he asked, under the illusion that I hadn't heard the joke 83 times before. Walk into any pub in Shepherd's Bush on Wednesday and, when Tony Casarino misses his first sitter of the evening, for every shout of "Jayzus, what

a gobshite," you'll hear two of "wha a tossah". Try telling any of the blokes with London accents that they're not Irish in spite of the green jerseys and you'll get pretty short shrift. Try telling them that the British-born children of Irish immigrants shouldn't be playing for Ireland and you'll get the same reaction.

It is true that Ireland uses parental qualification rules for players more than most (or even all) other countries. Ireland has been haemorrhaging people for 150 years and of all the people theoretically qualified to play for Ireland only a fraction is Irish by birth. I don't see why Alan Kelly, for example, should not play for Ireland just because his dad,

also an Irish international, had to move to Preston to get paid for playing football. Anyway, think of all the players we could have picked but didn't. Would Argentina have won the World Cup in 1986 if we had not generously overlooked the sweeper Jorge Brown's Irish grandmother? Possibly not, but since FAI officials had famously scoured a Wicklow graveyard at midnight to find the grave of Mark

FAN'S EYE VIEW

No 127
Republic of Ireland
GERARD HASSETT

Lawrenson's granny so that he could play for us it would have been a bit greedy to go for Jorge merely as a back-up. See how restrained we can be.

It is not even as if we are alone in this. A certain country not a million miles from here went to the 1990 World Cup with Terry Butcher, Tony Dorisio and John Barnes, who were born in Singapore, Australia and Jamaica respectively. Bobby Robson was even reported as trying to per-

suade the South African-born Roy Wegerle to join up as well. If only he had succeeded then he could have gone to the 1990 World Cup with a team made of players from every continent on Earth except America. Not that I want to point the finger at anyone.

Of course Ireland uses the fact that half the world has an Irish granny to gather as many good players as possible for our team. England uses the fact that it has a wealthy Premier League. I don't see much of a difference.

It is not where you're born but how you feel that gives you your nationality. If Mick McCarthy is English just because he was born here then Cliff Richard is Indian and the Duke

of Wellington was Irish. But as the Duke himself said, if you're born in a stable does it make you a horse?

As for Wednesday, I'll be back in the pub watching on satellite even though the game is on terrestrial TV for once. Even Charlton Athletic get on telly here more often than Charlton's Ireland and I'm not abandoning the *craic* in the local for the novelty of watching from the sofa. I know we will be going for all-out attack and a high-scoring win - once we get to the penalty shoot-out that is. But, if it all goes wrong and Aaron Winter should score against us at Anfield, I hope I won't be alone in appreciating the irony of it. Winter was born in Surinam.

صوتنا من الاجل

Phil Shaw previews a crucial weekend for some key figures in the Premiership

Covey revealed this week that they are £9m in debt and paying £8,000 a week in interest charges. Atkinson was still able to contemplate signing Crystal Palace's Chris Cole-

ALAN NIXON

Bristol City have launched an urgent appeal for a major backer to help keep them in business. They made a loss of nearly £80,000 when relegated from the First Division last season and

Homeless, points to a new £500,000, 600-bed facility. Work on the site is likely to be without their £500,000 recent signing. Pearce, the centre-back has a back injury so Release is poised to deputise.

Manchester Utd v Sheffield Wed
 Republic of Ireland full back Ivers is out of United side missing Schmeichel and Polster (injuries) plus Butt and Keane (suspension). Gigg may return.

Nottingham Forest v Aston Villa
 Former Arsenal striker Campbell (back) could return to the Forest attack. Ray is still recovering from an operation. Vela, without their fresh trio of McGrath, Saurson and Tover, may find that mid-fielder Taylor (wrestling) will be fit to play. Farrelly stands by to deputise while Simeone gets a rare first team opportunity.

expected to field one of the youngest sides in their history at Nottingham Forest tomorrow. Brian Little's team is likely to have an average age of 23, with Ian Taylor, 27, closest to collecting his bus-pass.

Backhand complement: Yevgeny Kafelnikov drives past Jacco Eltingh in the Grand Slam Cup in Munich yesterday.

Tennis

Ivanisevic reached the last four for the third time in his career on a walkover when the

With the departure of Sampras, Becker is the highest-ranked semi-finalist, and the German seems favourite to take the title. Already one of the most successful players on indoor surfaces, the No 4 ranked Becker has recovered his winning touch in recent weeks. He won the ATP World Championships

in Frankfurt last month and has looked impressive on the fast surface in Munich's Olympic Hall.

"I usually had my best performances in Frankfurt the last couple of years - reaching the final last year, winning it three years ago, winning it again a couple of weeks ago. It's the first time I kept my form over the two-week time off I had between Frankfurt and Munich," Becker said. "I guess it's because of my serve. I don't remember ever serving like I've been doing the last three to four weeks."

Byron Black felt its force in the quarter-finals when he was struck by 17 Becker aces. "I feel like on both serves I'm able to hit aces on all four corners, and that's very helpful. It puts the other guy under a lot of pressure," Becker said.

He said Munich's altitude makes the balls travel faster and gives him an advantage, while other players might be having problems adjusting to the conditions. "I live here, I practice every day here, so I'm used to that kind of playing."

Basketball

Palace have seven players with Budweiser experience and will be able to add their second foreign player, the 6ft 9in Canadian Eric Johnson. First Division games allow only one foreigner

Rugby League

Tick spe

Their new signing, Paul Newlove, is cup-tied for this round, but Scott Gibbs returns from injury and Vila Malautia from suspension to make Saints

Defeat for Rochdale would leave Leeds bidding to become Yorkshire's one representative in the semi-finals, provided they do nothing slack or silly against

Another Kiwi, the stand-off Tane Manihera, should be fit after missing Carlisle's defeat - their first in 15 matches - at Bramley last week.

Equestrianism

reconcile the fears of the American state of Georgia, of which Atlanta is the capital. Georgian officials are worried about a horse epidemic if European

The problem is equine piroplasmosis - a tick-borne parasitic blood disorder that infects a horse and causes fever.

International equestrian officials point out that exceptions to disease bans have been granted in the past and hope a similar solution could be found.

mosis. But the more humid Georgia climate is better suited for the ticks that transmit the disease, making that alternative more problematic.

Olympic goal in mind for Britain

Hockey

The object in Barcelona is to avoid the bottom three places in the eight nations round-robin. That will ensure a ticket to Atlanta and Shaw is likely to get the nod. But for the Olympics, where the first three places are those that really matter, Hoskins looks the stronger bet.

GREAT BRITAIN SQUAD (v) Belgium, Brussels, today and tomorrow) from: S Mason, H Hoskin, J Wyatt (all Reading), D Luckes (East Grinstead), J Hails, N Thompson (both Longhoughton), J Laslett (Teddington, capt), Soma Singh, J Shaw (both Southgate), S Hazitt, G Fordham, R Thompson (all Hounslow), D Hall (Gulford), R Garcia (Polo Barcelona), C Giles (Havant), C Mayer, Kalbir Talwar (both Cannock)

Quotes of the week

Bob Woolmer, the South Africa coach, agrees with Illingworth. ■ Putting South Africa in was the wrong decision and I felt I probably owed the lads an in-

Gascoigne after he was sent off against Borussia Dortmund. A few of our players have never seen snow before and many of them have not experienced it since 1995.

the enthusiast

heroes

One of his players there has
at his name to Garry
rhylfield's Rugby League Mas-
pieces, with Neil Hanson

his is a comprehensive anthology of writing on the game and undoubtedly worth any

There will be some writers like myself pleasantly surprised to have had their duodlings reclassified as

asterpieces, but Garry
thofield's Rugby League Pot-
boilers would not sound half as
ood. Also recommended:

New Breed Rising by Richard Becht (Hard-Sports, £14.95 from Open Rugby); **Buff and the Mighty Bongers** by Michael (Mike RL Publications, £9.95); **James Laytham's Diary** by Tom Mother (Self-published, £8.99); **Rothmans Rugby Active Yearbook** (Hedline, £16.99).

Dave Hadfield selects some of the publications dedicated to rugby league that will satisfy the enthusiast

St George's fallen dragons and other heroes

At the George – one of the best books on the game ever written – although I would happily have settled for that.

of the year is far more specific: *Never Before, Never Again* by Larry Writer (MacMillan Australia, £22.95 from Sports-pages). It is not an original idea to take a celebrated side and follow the lives of its players after the slump fades. It was applied

the treatment. Their subsequent fortunes encompass everything from wealth and public office to the gutter, and Writer draws out all the personalities involved in the most vivid fashion. There is

(self-published, £15.95). Cee Thompson's compelling *Born on the Wrong Side* (Pentland Press, £14.99) and an admirable history of professional rugby in London, *Touch and Go* by

average sports biography – especially on the subject of John Dorahy's turbulent season at Wigan. It is a shame it was written too soon to include Bell's own first experience of coaching at Leeds, which would be worth a new chapter in itself.

Also recommended:
New Breed Rising by Richard Bevan (Haro Sports, £14.95 from Open Rugby); **Bufferry and the Mighty Bonglers** by Michael Ham (Mike RL Publications, £9.95); **James Layton's Diary** by Tom Mother (Self-published, £8.99); **Rothmans Rugby League Yearbook** (Heddon, £16.99).

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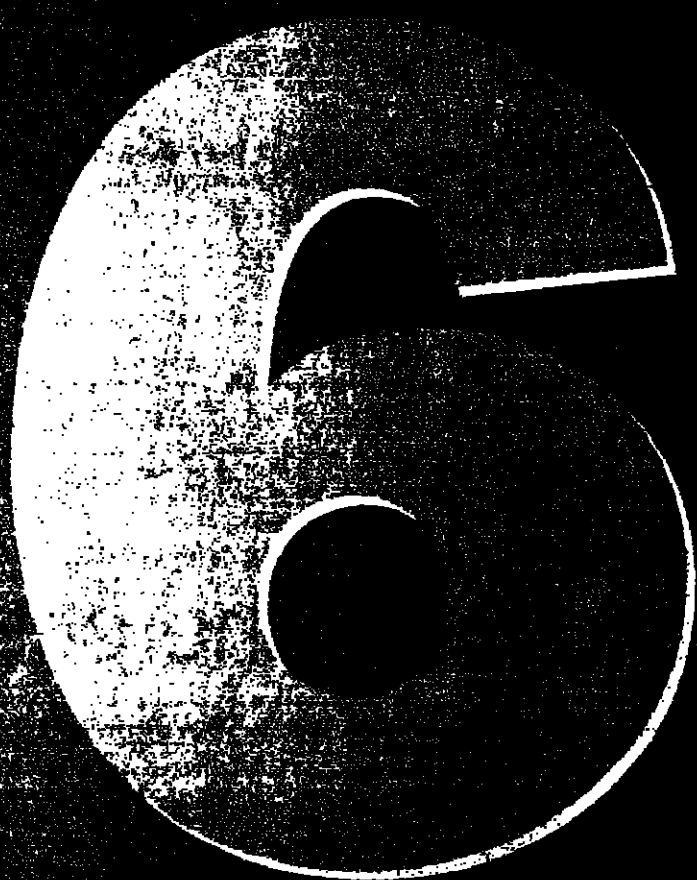
Wright v Rangers - 3rd Jan



Middlesbrough v
Aston Villa - 1st Jan



Man Utd - 1st Jan



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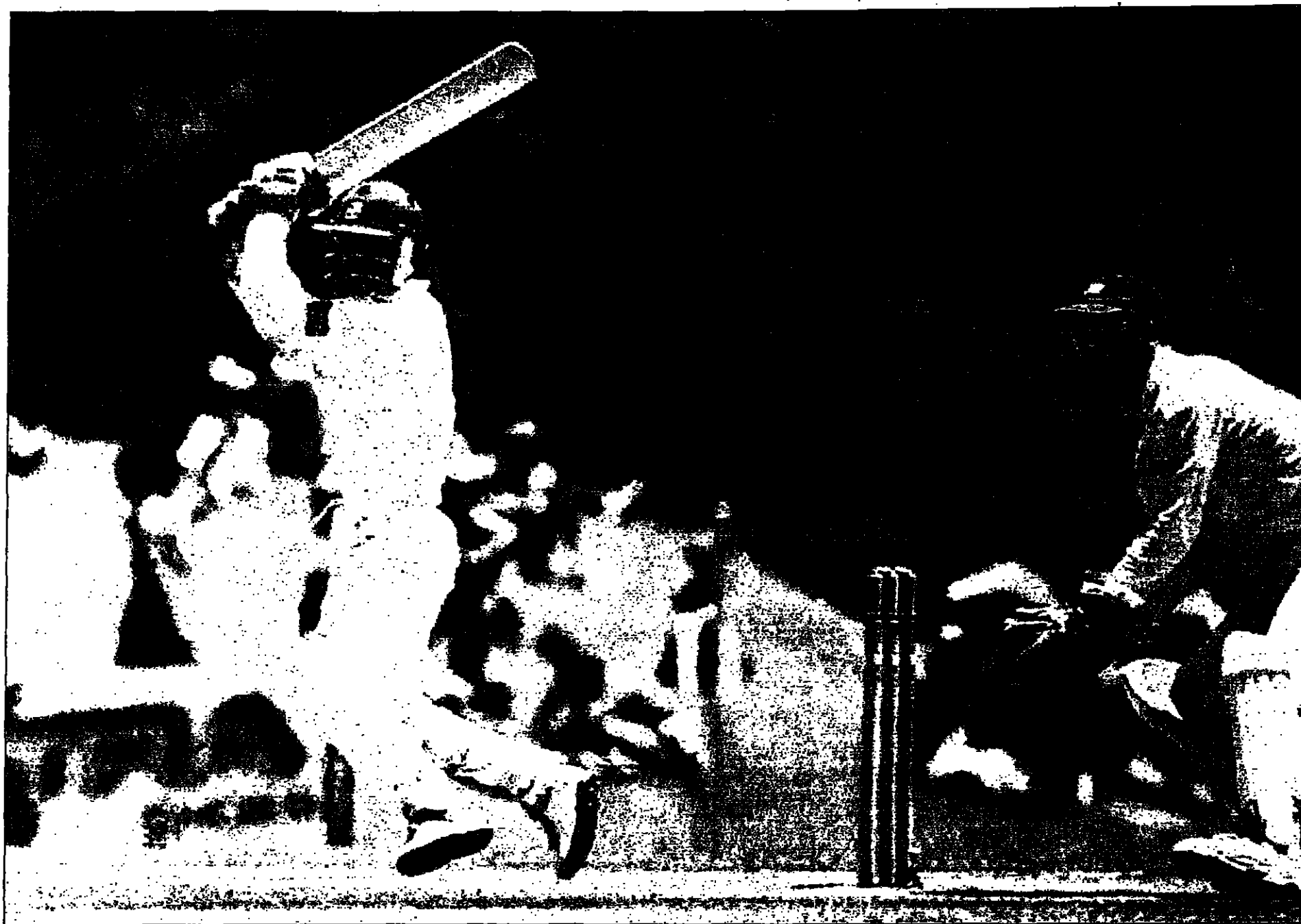


Seem - 10th Feb

صحنه من الراحل

SPORT

Every Monday: the best coverage of the weekend sport



At his peak: England's Jack Russell slashes through the off side during his career-best 129 not out against Boland yesterday

Photograph: Laurence Griffiths/Empics

Gough's Test place in danger

Cricket

DEREK PRINGLE
reports from Paarl
England 402-8 dec
Boland 129-4

Raymond Illingworth is not a man known for his indecision. True, he occasionally toys between having a bit of steak instead of the usual piece of haddock to go with his chips, but generally he is as unwavering in his cricketing decisions as he is with his diet.

One of these, since his appointment as selector in chief, has been to get some gritty Yorkshiremen involved, at almost any cost. Which in Craig White's case was quite high with the ball and extremely low with the bat. However, Darren Gough's inclusion, was broadly hailed as a master stroke, particularly after the Yorkshireman's gutsy performances on the last Ashes tour.

As ever, Illingworth was not slow to lap up the credit, but

Gough's performances on this tour have lacked both last winter's spirit and conviction. Without his chirpy confidence, he is a brook without babble, and when he hobbled off yesterday, shaking his head after pulling up in his fourth over — having apparently strained "something behind his knee" — his tour looked in danger of drying up.

Gough had needed wickets here, even before injury struck, if he was not to test Chairman Ray's parochialism too far and keep his place in the Test side. No easy task on a strip offering little more than a double hernia to seam bowlers, and the audible grunts of effort, easily outweighed the appeals, despite a Surrey presence at the helm.

Unsurprisingly, given the sluggish absorbent nature of the pitch, his closest rival, Mark Flitt, failed to take advantage of Gough's indisposition by remaining wicketless, and his claim for a place in the third Test may have to be placed on hold. Not so Peter Martin, who is

playing only his third first-class game of the tour. Tipped as one of the potential Lord Lucan figures when the party left London, he was the pick of the seam bowlers and he may well have become a late challenger for a place in the next Test.

Bowling from the Stables end, Martin got consistent bounce from short of a length, and his 10.2 overs deserved better than his 1 for 21. His persistence was rewarded when Bryan Baguley was caught at third slip, as he opened the bat face on one that climbed.

Otherwise it was an afternoon

for spin after Jack Russell and Richard Illingworth added 169 to take England's first innings score to 402 for 8 when Alec Stewart declared just after lunch. Russell scoring an undefeated career-best 129, with seven fours and one six in a 346-minute vigil. Eight more minutes and he would have completed 24 hours at the crease on tour. Illingworth weighed in with an unbeaten 57, his best score for his country, as the pair went about repairing the England total.

During the last Test Russell batted like someone being

zapped by a cattle prod. But when he plays his shots, with a bat that is closer to horizontal than vertical, he can reach almost any part of the ground irrespective of where the bowler lands the ball. As anyone who can recall his previous career-best score of 128 against Australia at Old Trafford in 1989 will know, his method is a triumph of heart over art.

He even managed a neat stumping, off Richard Illingworth, or so the umpire thought, though the television replay confirmed otherwise. Unless the law has changed under new EU guidelines to protect down-trodden minorities (i.e. left-arm spinners) the batsmen, Terry Lizard, had at least three inches of footwear behind the line, when the balls were eventually removed.

With the ball spinning, Illingworth and Watkinson bowled a lengthy spell in tandem. Illingworth, the chairman that is, is desperate to play a balanced attack in a Test match. But while Jack Russell's promotion to No

6 may make the gambit possible, Mike Watkinson's proficiency with the ball makes it unlikely.

Despite performing the perfect off-spinner's dismissal, by having Kenny Jackson caught by Crawley off bat and pad at short leg, he is out away far too often from balls too short and wide of the off-stump. Far better to be abstemious and let the pressure build like his left-arm foil Illingworth, than seek extravagant turn and give away too many runs.

Once again the Worcester spinner showed he has no challengers on this tour. Even South Africa's coach, Bob Woolmer, was spotted watching him wheel away for 22 overs, which suggests the next pitch in Durban may take some spin. If it does, South Africa's batsmen will not have much to go on. The trickiest delivery which accounted for Lloyd Ferreira was one that did not turn, though by the time Boland ended the day at 129 for 4, the pitch had begun to stir.

More cricket, page 31

Paarl Scoreboard

(Second day of three, England won toss)	
ENGLAND - First innings	402-8
Overseas: 285 for 8	
JR C Russell not out	129
R K Illingworth not out	57
Boland 10.2 overs	14
Total (for 8 decs, 282.5 overs)	402
Did not bat: M C Root	
England's Defences: 18-10-21-1; Villoughby 21-2-75-1; Stirling 19-5-47-2; Henderson 48-17-88-2; Drew 38-4-128-2; Jackson 6-0-25-0	
BOLAND - First innings	129-4
B C Baguley c Watkinson b Martin	21
LD Ferreira b Illingworth	35
T Lizard c Russell b Illingworth	37
K G Jackson c Crawley b Watkinson	29
"A" P Kipling not out	2
W F Stirling not out	2
Extras (bats, field)	12
Total (for 4, 98 overs)	129
Felt: 1-48, 2-78, 3-127, 4-128	
To bat: M C Root, P A J DeFreitas, C W Henderson, C M Villoughby, B J Drew, Bellingham 3-4-3-4-0; bat 10-3-24-0; Martin 10-2-1-8; Illingworth 22-6-43-2; Watkinson 10-5-24-1	
Umpires: M Baguley and R Brooks	

Atkinson offers £2.5m for Coleman

Football

MATT TENCH

Four days after confirming that they are £9m in the red, Coventry City have given their manager Ron Atkinson £2.5m to alleviate their position at the bottom of the Premiership. Half the money may go straight to Crystal Palace, who have accepted an offer of £2.5m for their Welsh international defender Chris Coleman.

Coleman was yesterday discussing terms with Atkinson, who said: "Chris has asked for the weekend to think it over. Out of the blue the chairman said that he wanted to bring someone of real quality into the club and when he said the money was available I was amazed. On second thoughts I should not have been. He is the most supportive chairman I have ever worked for. He wants success for all the right reasons, not for his personal reasons."

If the deal goes through the 25-year-old will be Atkinson's third Palace signing in five months, joining Richard Shaw and John Salako at Highfield Road. It would also set a Coventry transfer record, beating the £2m spent on Dion Dublin. Coleman, who can play as a centre-half or left-back will not be available for today's clash with Blackburn Rovers but Chris Whyte, recruited from Birmingham City on a month's loan yesterday, is likely to play.

Bryan Richardson, the City chairman, said: "Where this club has gone wrong in the past is by buying players by the dozen for £250,000 in the hope that a few will make it. We're still left with a lot of them and they're still not good enough. That's why we'll be buying quality not quantity from now on." Swansea, who sold Coleman to Palace for £275,000 in 1991 will receive a quarter of the fee. Coleman is the 12th member of the

Palace side relegated last season to leave Selhurst Park, for combined fees of more than £13m.

Atkinson is also thought to have made a bid in excess of £2m for a Premiership midfielder which may go through in the next few days, with Robbie Earle (Wimbledon), Alan Thompson (Bolton), Gavin Hastings (Chelsea) and Craig Egan (Middlesbrough) the most likely candidates.

Glasgow's dream, page 28

Weekend preview, page 29

Britons fell victim to 'vote fiddle'

Athletics

MIKE ROWBOTTOM

Allegations that Sally Gunnell and Colin Jackson lost out on rigged voting for the 1994 Athlete of the Year awards were denied yesterday by the International Amateur Athletic Federation.

Christopher Winner, the former IAAF spokesman, told the USA Today newspaper that Gunnell, who topped the women's poll ahead of Jackie Joyner Kersee, and Jackson, second in the men's, had been pushed down to second and fourth respectively. Winner claimed he had been instructed to add 30 extra votes for Joyner Kersee — two weeks after the poll closed in November 1994 — when it was learned that neither planned to attend the annual televised award dinner in Monte Carlo.

He said the IAAF president, Primo Nebiolo, wanted to ensure the top three athletes in each poll attended a ceremony broadcast to 74 countries.

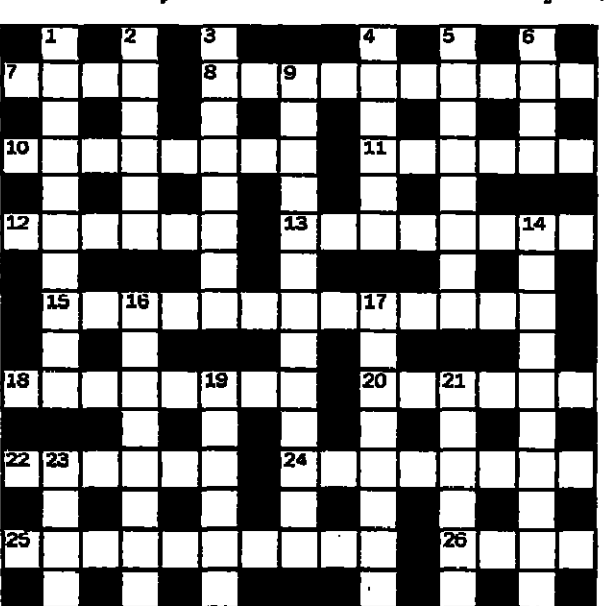
Friday's edition of USA Today quoted Winner as saying: "I can only express shame for participating in what amounts to gross vote rigging." Istvan Gyulai, the IAAF general secretary, responded: "We firmly reject these allegations." He pointed out that in the past award winners such as Carl Lewis had contributed by satellite link.

A spokeswoman for Nuff Respect, Jackson's management group, said: "Colin has said he would be very surprised if the allegations were true." Gunnell said she had no comment.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 2853, Saturday 9 December

By Mass



The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hand-packed copies of the excellent Chambers Biographical Dictionary, worth £25. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode. Last week's winners were Bernard Holt, Sutton Coldfield; Mr KT Harrison, Wantage; CG Andrews, Oxfordshire; R & J Besant, Dunstable; Dr Moragh J Nokes, Dorset.

ACROSS

- 7 Firm is found in square (4)
- 8 Needing little cash, or beginning to deal in kind? (10)
- 10 Food processor's a source of trouble (8)
- 11 Reportedly lunches in seaside recesses (6)
- 12 French brass in charge (6)
- 13 Expanded English garden, made to accommodate lake (8)
- 15 Divers, perhaps (13)
- 18 Initiate bold knight, say (8)
- 20 Bird resulting from reduction of the charge? (6)
- 22 Show up in cheap pearls (6)
- 24 One won, playing in unfamiliar poker group? (8)
- 25 One of four right on the line in court (10)
- 26 Sounded rough — and had regrets (4)

Friday's solution

UNIONICLY ENLAGE
NOIABIRIMWY
WALLSTREETCRASH
TALLERROPE
GRUBBYINIBER
EABEABIE
ABEYANCEAROMA
RLARBL
EMENDMAINTAIN
RENDERAGHESY
RIVATIPROD
ASTHICKASAPLANK
SRNELEME
EMERGEHEADLESS

DOWN

- 1 One arranging courses for weight reduction, initially (10)
- 2 Deranged element around North (6)
- 3 Bit from piano piece (8)
- 4 Like families born into hardship (6)
- 5 It could be court for the boulder (8)
- 6 Southern crowd's in the groove (4)
- 9 Emergency measure when making pancakes? (6,7)
- 14 E.g. elder in set, say, squandered wealth (4,6)
- 16 Hangs from shelves (8)
- 17 Note ring produced by atmospheric factor (8)
- 19 Extra non-English crew member for vessel (6)
- 21 Green shoots up in sandy deserts (just) (6)
- 23 Benefit from having a nap? Not quite (4)

Last Saturday's solution

WASHBASIN HISE
IPEETSDO
REACHNONPARELL
ESTDGENE
LAMINAEVEGITAL
DRESITY
STRATOSPHERIC
SUHMSAS
SHEPTONMAILET
TYEANA
COMPTON SIOGAR
AWOGUE
PROFESSION AWARE
OSUNSBY
TEST MATCHES

In Monday's 24-page sports section

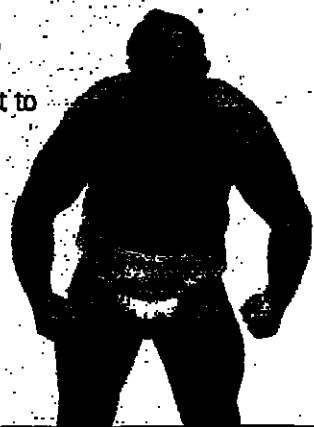
Preparing for Tyson

"I know a lot of people who would start smoking cigars and hanging about in Stringfellows. There have been quite a few boxers over the years who have lost themselves after they had won a world title. They allowed themselves to get carried away from it all, and it was awful to watch them. But I'm a young man. I've got 30 years of work ahead of me and other careers to think about. That's why I'm prepared to clock in and work." Frank Bruno tells Ian Stafford why he is looking forward to defending his world crown against the world's most awesome boxer



Preparing for Tokyo

He's 43, he comes from Blackpool and he's about to take on the Japanese at their own game. Bill Etherington, who won a bronze medal at the World Sumo Championships 12 months ago, looks forward to this year's event in Tokyo



Mind games

Never mind skill, tactics or fitness, the key factor for many sportsmen and women today is their mental approach. In the first of a two-part study, John Roberts reports on the increasingly important role of sports psychology

Comprehensive reports and analysis of all the weekend action

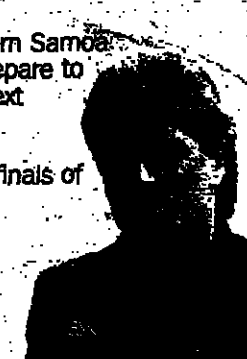
Extensive football coverage, including reports from every Premiership match. Glenn Moore assesses Newcastle United's championship challenge as Kevin Keegan's Premiership leaders face Chelsea at Stamford Bridge

Derek Pringle reports from South Africa as the England cricket team warm up for next week's third Test

Steve Bale watches the Western Samoa rugby union tourists as they prepare to face England at Twickenham next Saturday

Dave Hadfield on the quarter-finals of rugby league's Regal Trophy

Richard Edmondson reports from Cheltenham on the Tripleprint Gold Cup



Plus

Sports book of the week
Greg Wood on sports betting
...and Tim Glover has The Final Word

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Saturday 9 December 1995 Registered as a newspaper with the Post Office

We thought about calling it E.T.'s Finger, but it isn't long and knobbly with a glowing light at the end.



THE SERIOUS BEER WITH THE SILLY NAME.

INSIDE

Michael is an inalienable authority figure that it would relations-w hair down the wear the S but I will n

About 18 p in the New so it's not a to the Breco a problem. And t is absolutely where the c

THE STORY INTERVIEW OFFERING

صبرنا من الامل

Weekend

Independent

What Damien did next

(with a little help from Eddie and Keith) page 9



Eddie Hirst, Damien Hirst and Keith Hirst photographed by Glynn Griffiths

INSIDE STORIES

2 Michael is torn between his inalienable position as his company's authority figure and his gut feeling that it would be beneficial, public relations-wise, to be seen to let his hair down for one special night. 'I will wear the Santa hat,' he concludes, 'but I will not dance on the table'

4 'About 18 people a year go missing in the New Forest,' says Karl. 'OK, so it's not a great problem compared to the Brecon Beacons. But it's still a problem. Children wander out of tents. And the Dorset Coastal Path is absolutely deadly.' Which is where the otterhound comes in

3 'I like the public perception of me that makes people too scared to come up to my table when I'm out having dinner,' says Sean Penn, the brat actor turned director who swapped the knuckle-duster for the clapper-board. 'A bad reputation is a hell of a device for privacy'

5 Why do the British dress up so badly? Famous for our sense of occasion we seem to have no sense of occasion wear. It could be genetic. There could be some deep, inborn reason why British women look less chic the more important the occasion and the more they lavish upon the outfit

PICTURE STORY	2	ARTS	8-9	TRAVEL	16-21	GOING OUT	30
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Hunting for Perfection~

Ah-ha!

OLD SPECKLED HEN

A finely balanced, deliciously smooth ale, with a subtle blend of flavours. A fitting reward for all who pursue perfection. Catch one at your local. Brewed by Morland of Abingdon. Est'd. 1711.

picture story



Pictures by
Brian Harris,
Nicholas Turpin.
Story by
Dan Patterson

THE OFFICE PARTY



The complex and unnerving world of the office party, the temporary cessation of the fragile costructure of the workplace environment. The unassuming, mousey assistant to the facilities manager who, 364 days of the year, timidly avoids eye contact, and then, come the Christmas party, turns up in Lycra and starts flamenco dancing on top of the CD Rom. These are strange times, when we must re-evaluate our carefully constructed perceptions so radically. But tomorrow, it'll all be OK: she will be mousey again.

Charlie, from Debenhams, thinks he may "tap off with one of the ladies tonight from the head office", but fears that "because they all come from Basildon, they're probably all lesbians".

Suzie contends this claim. "We are not lesbians. We just don't fancy Charlie. Would you?"

Michael, the boss of Chatham's branch of Expanse Communications, is torn between his inalienable position as the company's authority figure — "respect comes naturally from distance, and respect is vital in maintaining the power structure" — and his gut feeling that it would be beneficial, public relations-wise, to be seen to be able to let his hair down for one special night. "I will wear the Santa hat," he concludes, "but I will not dance on the table. And you certainly cannot photograph me in the Santa hat. Out of context, it may be misconstrued."

"Can one maintain respect whilst in a Santa hat?" I ask.

"There are no hard and fast rules," admits Michael. "It is all in the individual's psychological make-up. Hang on? What's this?"

Janine — from marketing — has just rested a jelly on Michael's head, and the table turns, silently, to see how he will respond to this festive crack in the chain of respect.

"That's very funny," says Michael. "Very funny indeed." He pauses. "But don't think you can get away with that in the staff canteen tomorrow!"

Everyone laughs and visibly relaxes. Michael turns and winks at me. "See?" he whispers.

Over at the Islington branch of the Body Shop party — at Casper's wine bar in Hanover Square — they are nervous that the *Independent* may misinterpret the fun to be something bad, something illicit.

"We're doing nothing wrong. It's just a laugh. Honestly. This isn't a bad thing. You journalists always pick on us. But this is just fun. It doesn't mean anything."

"I'm not picking on you," I say, "although your foam bath doesn't foam properly."

"It does! It does! Especially the Venezuelan milk bath. Just put double the amount specified under the hot tap... and hang on. I don't want to talk shop tonight. We're having fun. There's nothing wrong with that."

And at Anemos restaurant in Charlotte Street, some of the gentlemen watching the belly dancer are officers from one of the local police stations, celebrating another successful year of crime fighting.

"If you take our photograph close up," one suggests, with a rather startlingly unfestive facial expression, "we will find out where you live, follow you home, and make sure you never take another photograph in your life. You'd better watch yourself. We've got diplomatic immunity."

"I've got three of these tonight," says the belly dancer. "I'm off to Ealing and Acton next. They're a pretty quiet crowd tonight. A bit reserved."



THIS WEEKEND WHY NOT...



READ

The new Elizabeth Jane Howard

Leave the outside world locked in an icy embrace, stoke up the kindling, poke the Coalite and dive into the Cazalet chronicles. *Casting Off* — the fourth of Elizabeth Jane Howard's quartet of fictions set between 1937 and 1947 and starring the titular family (the other three are available in Pan paperback, £4.95) — has just been published, to rave reviews (see page 12). It's that rare literary phenomenon: the intelligent saga. Imagine: 2,000 pages of family-fortunes popular fiction at which highbrows do not sneer and which nervous middlebrows may admit to enjoying. Apart from charting 10 years of friendships, affairs, rows, war and reconciliation, the books give you an unrivalled picture of Britain during the last war — the wallpaper you'd have chosen, the correct way of dealing with servants, the peculiar taste of rationed bread. Unmissable. *Casting Off* is published by Macmillan at £15.99



BUY

A Georgina von Etzdorf scarf

Most people's idea of a scarf is something scratchy and woolly that you were forced to wear at school and always managed to lose. As Isabella Rossellini, the Princess of Wales, Mick Jagger and David Bowie will tell you, a von Etzdorf scarf is something else. Her trademarks are velvet (she was responsible for the whole velvet renaissance), satins and chiffon with instantly recognisable prints that look like the doodles of an artist lost deep in thought. What's more, you don't take these luscious items off once you step indoors. They can caress your neck or slip teasingly from your shoulders. They frame a humble black dress with a halo of colour, and transform a simple white shirt into a dandyish outfit.
■ Georgina von Etzdorf Designs start at £85 and are available from her shops at 50 Burlington Arcade, London W1 (0171-409 7789) and 149 Sloane Street, London SW1 (0171-823 5638)



SEE

Twyla Tharp's Rossini Ballet

Twyla Tharp has choreographed everything from Philip Glass in the thrilling, exhilarating *In the Upper Room* to Frank Sinatra's hits in the glamorous, bewitching *Nine Sinatra Songs*. Now America's most gifted and exuberant choreographer has created a full-length piece with the Royal Ballet and the result, *Mr. Woodly-Wise*, opens tonight with an all-Russian score. What's more, she has chosen Darcie Russell, Irak Mukhamedov and Tetsuo Kumakawa (who can leap higher than a hawk) as her leading dancers. You have to pay over £200 to see Pavarotti or Domingo at Covent Garden. Top-price tickets for this breathlessly anticipated event are, wait for it, £27.50 down to just £2. If you haven't seen Tharp, you haven't seen dance.
■ *Mr. Woodly-Wise* is at Covent Garden, London WC2, 7pm (0171-304 4000)



EAT AT

The Avenue

Anyone who's anyone is bored of the Atlantic, so grab your tastebuds and cocktail dress and join the likes of Bruce Springsteen and Mica Paris at the capital's smartest new restaurant, the Avenue. It's got a huge, lofty dining area, and the biggest bar to the UK, topped with amber glass. Shining violets had better dash elsewhere, since architect Rick Matthei's brief is "urban theatre". This basically means glass walls and ceilings to hide everyone's staring at everyone else... or the giant video wall, or Norman Parkinson's photographs, or the live band, or the staff sporting Niels Park uniforms, or, well, a menu, their food. Yes, it's a restaurant too, and the "progressive, modern European" tick will set you back a not outrageous £25 per head with wine.
■ The Avenue, 77-79 St James's Street, London SW1 (0171-323 2111)



VISIT

National Cat Club Show

Baby faces are on the loose in London today, not to mention little ocelots and the odd neutered sphinx — just three of the more exotic new breeds of feline gracing today's National Cat Club Show at Olympia. Purr with delight at the Bengal (bred in India), the spotted Ocicat and two new longhairs, Norwegian Forest and Maine Coon. Feel the hairs on your back bristle with alarm at the pink Hairless Cat which looks like it's come in for a severe scalding, and the Scottish Fold, which appears to have had its ears stapled to its head. Would-be champion breeders take note: Judges are unimpressed by names like Tiddles: Last year's Cat of the Year went by the title of Grand Premier Chakel Ever Ready Eddy.
■ National Cat Club Show, Olympia, Hamlets Smith Rd, London W14, 10.30am-5.30pm. £4/£2 children & OAPs.

A tough act to follow

Sean Penn, the brattiest member of the Eighties 'bratpack', has given up punching paparazzi and fighting women. Prison and fatherhood can do that to a man. By Daniel Jeffreys



Photograph: KM Fox / Sygma

The eyes, the hair, the hands: they all say the same thing – don't mess. This is Sean Penn, Hollywood's perennial bad boy, the man who married Madonna, the ex-con. Lighting his fourth cigarette in 20 minutes, Penn leans back and smiles through a haze of smoke. "You know, people's image of you can be very liberating."

Sean Penn was 35 last August. He has two children by his former girlfriend, the actress Robin Wright. He's old enough to have outgrown the so-called "bratpack" of the early Eighties, in which he shared top billing with Tom Cruise and Mickey Rourke. But he's young enough not to have erased the reputation he earned in those early years – as a group of young, hot-blooded male actors who wore their curly lips and bad attitudes like badges of rank: it was something of an achievement to earn the status of black sheep of the bratpack. But Penn rose to the challenge, magnificently, and took the title with ease with a series of brawls and bad relationships that made him a public relations disaster area for the studios he worked with. Penn had leading roles in *Bad Boys* (1983), *The Falcon and the Snowman* (1985) and *Colors* (1988), but his notoriety as a ticking bomb made him unpopular with producers, who found his behaviour disruptive.

Sean Penn the grown-up is now selling himself as a director, and in doing so he's demonstrating the kind of discipline few thought he possessed. He made his directorial debut in 1991 with *The Indian Runner*, which earned mixed reviews, but was considered good enough to give him a second shot. He now writes his own scripts and has developed a knack of hustling Hollywood money to make films the way he wants to make them.

Penn directed, wrote and co-produced his latest film, *The Crossing Guard*, a story of loss and revenge that has just opened in the US. He also coaxed remarkable performances from two of Hollywood's classiest players, Jack Nicholson and Anjelica Huston, as the parents of a boy killed by a drunk driver in a bleak, harrowing film that makes few allowances for traditional Hollywood rules (no happy endings here).

The movie will open in the UK next month, but it has already won critical acclaim in America – "beautifully atmospheric", said *Entertainment Weekly*; "astonishing", said the *New York Observer*; "one of the most pow-

erful films this year", said *New Yorker* magazine.

This is a far cry from *Shanghai Surprise*, the George Harrison-produced movie in which Penn co-starred with Madonna in 1986 while the two were married. *Halliwel's Film Guide* called the movie "astonishingly abysmal"; the *New York Times* nominated it as "a strong candidate for worst movie of the decade"; and *Variety* said the film was "so bad it hurt".

The bad boy in Sean Penn was surpassing himself at this time: he was variously accused of assaulting Madonna, assorted paparazzi and a host of people unlucky enough to get in his way. The drugs and the alcohol didn't help any and his career prospects were looking distinctly B-list. Then in 1987 he spent 37 days in the Los Angeles County jail for reckless driving, time enough to decide that it would be a good idea to grow up a little.

"They put leg irons on me, handcuffs real tight and a belly chain – the whole works. It weren't too comfortable." We're sitting in a Manhattan hotel room and Penn's whole demeanour still suggests an edge. His face has the nicks of a street fighting man. In between cigarettes he takes ice from a glass of Coke and cracks it between his teeth – not, perhaps, the most menacing of gestures, but you can imagine him doing the same thing to small rocks. His clothes are street smart. A grey jacket with two shirts beneath, both with open necks, cuff buttons undone.

"I don't see life as an opportunity to see how bad things can get, although I think I've challenged it a bit." He takes a deep drag on his cigarette and coughs, making a strange noise at the back of his throat. "Like, I've got to give these up. But in life you have to make some investment in uncomfortable things, like fear and pain and rage. Now I think I have just built better channels for all those feelings."

Sean Penn more or less announced his retirement from acting in 1991 so that he could concentrate on *The Indian Runner*. Then financial pressures forced him back in front of the lens to co-star in Al Pacino's *Carlito's Way*, a performance that won critical acclaim. Now he's acting again, in *Dead Man Walking*, written and directed by his friend Tim Robbins. (The movie will be released in the UK next March.) Penn plays a Death Row inmate and his performance is chilling, putting him right up there with some of cinema's most convincing villains.

The film is based on a book by Sister Helen Prejean, played in the film by Susan Sarandon. She was on Death Row with the character portrayed by Penn and she watched him recreate the scene. "Sean was astonishing in the role. I was so convinced one time, I accidentally called him by the dead man's name [Matthew Poncellet]. When I watched him again on film I couldn't stop crying." Sister Prejean believes that Penn's performance should put him in line for an Oscar, not that he'll get one. He's still too much of an outsider.

"The rule in Hollywood today is that a movie with more than two thoughts is an unsuccessful picture." Penn leans forward and strikes the table. "Every fucking moment of your movie should be a big deal, and if it's not truly a part of your heart, then it's garbage. I think this is now an incredibly cowardly business and it makes me very angry."

And what makes Penn very angry is this: that big money and big corporations such as Time Warner and Sony have stifled creativity. "As far as I'm concerned, most people in this business are a bunch of scared puppies. I don't think it takes much to do something with thought. Literally, you put three ideas together in a movie and you are my hero." He leans back in his chair to exhale, a neat effect before pressing home his attack. "I can't find those movies. Ever."

He's prepared to make some exceptions. Penn's influences as a director are John Cassavetes, Martin Scorsese and Woody Allen. "I'm a huge fan of Woody. I've enjoyed all his work, even the bad ones. I would love to see Scorsese direct a Cassavetes script or Scorsese direct Allen."

And he's a fan of European cinema. "France still has an active tradition of treating films as a means of expression – I loved *Betty Blue*. Here it's just a business." He lists among his favourite movies *My Life as a Dog*, Swedish director Lasse Hallström's 1985 feature about a young child's summer with a relative in the country. "It's just a simple, beautiful story. It's story-telling that happens to be done honestly, without some pat idea about how life is supposed to be. You have not seen one movie like that come out of this country. When I say that not much good comes out of Hollywood," continues Penn, on a roll now. "I'm including the so-called moderns, 'Quentin Tarantino'. He'll give you Quentin Tarantino. That's experimental *nouveau chic* bullshit."

This kind of outspokenness you expect from Penn. Thoughtfulness, from a man once famed for hitting before thinking, is more surprising. In a year when Hollywood has been under attack by right-wing politicians (the Republican Senator Bob Dole referred to it as a "cesspool of depravity"), Penn is concerned that the industry is entering a dark era of increasing repression, a trend he sees throughout the country.

"I think movies are moving further and further to the right. I think the whole country is moving further and further to the right," Penn smiles, a twinkle in his eye, as if he's daring you to cast him as a crank. Perhaps it's to emphasise the point that his speech takes a wider turn. "The only thing that's been proved about moving to the right is that ultimately it gets taken too far and people rise up. The problem is now we no longer have a war on the streets where oppressed people are going to be turned against their own kind and then refuse to follow orders. We used to have the blacks in police cars and tanks oppress their own people, and there was always the chance one day they would just say 'no' and would turn those weapons against the government. Now it's all technological. We have smart bombs and can do it all without human contact by pressing buttons, so we're fucked."

Penn rounds off this passage with a laugh, but he's not finished yet. Oh no. These days it is politicians, not paparazzi, who are on the receiving end of his famous temper. "They are still going to need a population at the end of the day to make money for them, so we are going to need a whole new kind of revolution, one that copes with this new global empire, which is all corporate."

"You hope that movies can be important in defending freedom," continues Penn, crunching ice and striking a match. "But if they can do good, they can also be damaging. Movies are powerful medicine, for good and ill. Sometimes it's hard to justify any involvement with Hollywood."

Penn has been involved, since birth. He was born into a showbusiness family and his brother Christopher is also an actor. He first made a splash in 1981 as a military cadet in *Taps*. Then he played Jeff Spicoli, the ultimate surfer dude in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, a hilarious satire on teenage sex in the Eighties. The movie revealed a natural comic charm that Penn has rarely displayed on film (and, given the reception given to his priests-on-the-run comedy *We're No Angels*, with Robert

De Niro, rare it is likely to remain).

Despite some strong acting credits, Penn does not want to be seen as an actor. He accepted the role in *Dead Man Walking* because he loved the script and Tim Robbins is, like him, a writer/director. He is scheduled to play Brendan Behan in a biographical movie about the Irish playwright, but he is not keen to take on other roles.

"Acting gives me far fewer choices," he says. "When you act, the people around you are imposed from outside, right down to the prop shifters. I like to pick the people I have to be with at 6am or 7am. When I start to write or direct I'm looking forward, looking at something I'm not yet sure about. If I'm acting, I'm going back and looking at something I already know."

Many who have worked with Sean Penn say he now takes his craft seriously: I mean, he is even said to arrive at the set on time, something no self-respecting wild man would build into his schedule (the young Penn was indeed a late shower on sets). It's clear he wants to be taken seriously. As he focuses on the smoke above his head he appears to struggle for the words that define his various personalities. He describes himself as "intuitive", "impetuous", and as "having trouble coping with my rage on occasion".

Perhaps the best clues to his personality and interests lie in the common thread that binds *The Indian Runner* with *The Crossing Guard* and *Dead Man Walking*. All three are about men in deep emotional trouble. "I'm interested in questions of guilt and rage," says Penn. "What do you do with guilt and rage? And what is rage if it's not a buffer for facing loss? The thing that paralyzes us most is the fear of future loss. I guess with all these movies I'm trying to comfort myself on that issue."

Penn gets up to stretch and walks around the room. He's only about 5ft 6in, but he packs a lot of energy into a small frame. He looks every inch the hard man, and he has the tattoo to prove it: a heart on his left thumb. "I did the outline of this in jail," he says. "I got bored. When I got out, a lady put her initials in the centre." The heart has now been coloured in, the initials no longer visible. "Yep, some other lady made me do that."

Ah, the ladies. His marriage to Madonna lasted less than a year and ended in recriminations. He was seen with a string of other women and both

he and Madonna accused each other of violent behaviour. Penn is an admirer of tough women. "I like writing about women, my scripts tend to be little love letters to whoever I'm thinking about at that time. Little homages to their toughness. Women are the bone of my existence but I always fall for them."

Penn subscribes to the Hollywood mantra of honesty – something, he says, he's a one-woman-guy at heart) and in his movies. But scoff not: those who have worked with him most recently see him as the genuine, honest article. "Sean has a lot of strengths as a director," says David Morse, who plays the target of Nicholson's rage in *The Crossing Guard*. "He has a real world view and that makes him want to tell the story his way." Cathy Moriarty, an Oscar winner, has kept a close eye on Penn's career for a decade: "Sean has no fear," she says. "He has found his niche in life, he's a wonderfully talented director."

But Penn is no dourling. He has proved himself a difficult customer to work with – an invader at one of the studios which has backed his projects says: "Sean is a nightmare, he's so committed to his vision that in an argument he'll take no prisoners. It makes it hard to negotiate."

Penn insists on absolute control as a director. His cut is the final cut, he will allow no change of endings to satisfy some focus group in suburban Illinois. "As the writer of the film, I don't want anybody to mess with it," says Penn. "But there's another side. I am selling a product and I want people to come and buy again, so if I have final cut authority, I can invite arguments into the process without feeling compromised."

At the VHI Fashion and Music awards in New York this week Penn was a surprise guest, presenting a statuette to Madonna. The tabloids went crazy with speculation about a reconciliation. Penn lights another cigarette and blows smoke on the idea: the only kind of partnership he won't rule out is an acting partnership. "I think she's an untapped talent – given the right material I'd work with Madonna. She's a very specific presence in the world and in my life."

Brat turned director, knuckle-duster swapped for a clapper-board. Sean Penn has enjoyed the transition, but he wouldn't want you to think all his rough edges have been smoothed. "I like the public perception of me that makes people too scared to come up to my table when I'm out having dinner." He stubs out another cigarette. "A bad reputation is a hell of a device for privacy."

country

If he trots towards you
chewing, get out quick

My first job of the day is to check the pigs are all there and give them their morning feed. We have one boar and five breeding sows now, which is down a bit on last year, but still means we'll produce 35-40 piglets next Easter.

"During the mating season, before Christmas, I can't go in the pen because the boar would attack me. During the rest of the year he's usually all right: although if he trots towards you chewing hard it's time to get out - he's sharpening his tusks against each other ready for a fight."

"In the wild they're a different thing altogether: very shy and retiring. A boar would have to be really pushed to attack, although dogs are a problem. They don't like them at all and if one comes sniffing around where they're hiding they'll go at it."

"My boar came originally from Poland - and like most Polish animals he's very big and black. The sows are much smaller and, coming from France, light brown. The herd lives in a bit of waste ground, fenced in with electric netting."

"They each get a daily bucket of cake and two or three times a week I tip in a trailer load of stock potatoes. We would like our animals to be organic, but it would be uneconomic because the feed is four times the price. Instead we sell our animals as 'additive free' - reared without growth promoters, hormones and antibiotics. I worm them, but that's all in the way of medicines. A wild boar grows very slowly - five years before a big boar has finished - and you can't get round it. Feeding growth hormones and the like has been tried and it just doesn't work."

"Last year I grew a field of fodder beet for them - I broadcast the seed by hand in a paddock they'd ploughed up and fertilised. I didn't bother to harvest it - just let them back in."

"Most of our animals go to a 'real meat' shop two miles up the road, but I also sell to a game dealer. At first we had problems finding an abattoir - a wild boar's bristles are so coarse they clog up the machines and once one got frisky and had one of the butchers up against the wall. Now we have a deal where we



COUNTRY LIVES

Daniel Butler talks to Andrew Holman, wild boar farmer near Knighton, Powys

always send animals in pairs - they're calmer in a herd - and they're skinned rather than scalded."

"A good animal will fetch £200, but even so, there's no money in wild boar farming: unlike sheep, there are no subsidies. Also, commercial pigs are ready for slaughter at four to six months, but it's 18 months before my animals reach 100lbs."

"To be honest, the real reason I do it is because I fell in love with them while I was on exercises in Germany. When I left the army and went into sheep farming, I wanted to diversify into something a bit more interesting. To find out more, I went to a conference where I expected everyone else to be like me - enthusiasts. Instead I found most were commercial pig farmers, looking to increase the hardness of their animals."

"That's because there's very little work with wild boar - they are so tough they live outside all year round even though we're 1,500 feet up. Unlike our 800 sheep, we never have to call the vet during farrowing. A boar's pelvic contractions are so powerful they would break your arm if you tried to help and anyway the piglets are torpedo shaped and come rocketing out with no problems."

"The only real headache is when one gets out. They immediately become very shy and nocturnal and shooting is the only answer. It's difficult and time-consuming. Unlike most animals, a wild boar's eyes don't show up in a torch beam, so you have to bait where you can floodlight the whole area. Even then it can take nights of waiting before you get a clear shot."

A little local trouble
A weekly round-up
of rural rumpuses

The salmon are running. This is good news for fishermen - and for poachers. Andrew Veitch, a former manager with the Tweed Foundation and river bailiff, has just set up Fish First, a consultancy to advise landowners in the Scottish Borders how to deal with poachers. He knows what he is talking about. In his 18 years on the

rivers Mr Veitch has had his office set on fire and been threatened with beatings by poaching gangs.

The growing reputation of the Clyde as a salmon river in particular is encouraging irregular methods of fishing. "It seems some members of the local population are gaining a certain notoriety for devising innovative ways to get the salmon out of the water," Mr Veitch said. "Crossbows have been mentioned, but at this stage I don't know what advice I could offer to stop that method of fishing."



They're mucky, they smell

But they could just save your life. Meet the otterhounds. By Martin Whittaker

A big shaggy hound called Cautious is straining at the leash, raring to go. Owner and trainer Karl Hopton sees her up. "Go on then, Cautious! Find her... go on... find her!"

And she's off, her keen nose to the ground. With Karl barely keeping up, Cautious pelts through the heather, down into the valley, up the other side and then disappears over the brow of the hill.

Soon she reappears with her quarry, RSPCA supervisor Sheila Rowe, who was attempting to hide in the next valley.

This is just a demonstration. In a proper training session the day before, another of Karl's hounds, Grayling, managed to track somebody who's scent had been cold for eight hours, across moorland ripe with the distracting scents of rabbits, deer and New Forest ponies.

Cautious and Grayling are otterhounds, an old and rare breed. The earliest references of hounds being used to hunt otters go back to the thirteenth century. But it's believed that the otterhound as we know it was established as a breed in the 19th century.

When otters became protected the hounds were used to hunt mink, for the show ring and occasionally as pets. Today there are reckoned to be only between 200 and 300 left in this country.

Now Karl Hopton has found a new job for the magnificent otterhound - hunting people. He is training Cautious, Grayling and two other hounds for a new Track

and Search Dog Service for Dorset and the New Forest.

The scheme has financial backing from a number of local councils and the approval of Dorset police, and is expected to be launched in January. Karl and a group of fellow otterhound owners will take turns to be on call, ready to respond in the event of an emergency.

"About 18 people a year go missing here," says Karl. "OK, not a great problem if you compare it with somewhere like the Brecon Beacons. But it's still a problem. The New Forest attracts a lot of visitors, and there are children who wander out of tents. Then there's the Dorset Coastal Path, which is absolutely deadly."

Until now they've been using the police dog section to find people, but the otterhounds have the ability to track much longer and much colder scents than a police dog.

Karl 31, was a dog trainer with the Army when he first saw an otterhound being used by the Garda in Ireland to sniff out explosives. When he left the Army he became an animal welfare officer with East Dorset District Council. Then one day he went to license a local kennels that bred otterhounds.

I said I remember those - can I take one out, see whether they'll track me? They said by all means. So we kept going out every day, taking a different one. None of them had ever done it before, but they all had this ability.

"They're the hardest breed I know - they just keep going and



Cautious and Grayling: able to track much colder scents than police dogs

Photographs: Alexander Caminada

going. You could go through thickest brambles and gorse with an otterhound and it wouldn't bat an eyelid. A bloodhound wouldn't even attempt it - it would go around and try to pick up the scent on the other side."

He's been training four otterhounds since April this year, and is now starting on a bloodhound-otterhound cross - a "blotterhound" called Bowman.

Out on moorland on the edge of the New Forest, Cautious and Grayling go lolling through treacherous-looking bogs, and plunge into a ditch of brackish

water, basking in it as if that's where they belong. In a sense, it is.

"They're built totally for the job they used to do, explains Karl. "They've got a very thick double coat, one of the coats is very wiry, rather like a waxy Barbour jacket. If you tip a bucket of water over them it just runs off. You have to really soak them to get them wet."

"All dogs have a web foot, but the otterhound's web is wider, and they've got long ears that are heavily insulated. They are made for the cold Scottish rivers - they're tremendous swimmers."

Training them, however, is not easy. "Hounds are dog-trainers' nightmares. They're very independent - they'll do exactly what they want to do - suddenly pick up the scent of a rabbit and they're off. You have to be really patient with them, you have to try and channel that hunting instinct."

"We've put a logo on all our letterheads - 'Living in a world of scent' - because I believe these hounds are living in a world of their own. They're not in our world most of the time - they're wandering along, and they're so busy discovering the scent that they wander up to you and crash straight into your feet."

Another aspect of the otterhound he loves is its placid nature. They're completely non-aggressive both to other dogs and humans. Although some people do keep them as pets, Karl sees them more as working hounds.

"Mine live in a kennel outside and I wouldn't have them in the house. The reason is that when they're dirty, they're really dirty."

Try and imagine them coming out of the river, that coat full of water. And they have an odour about them. No - they're working animals."

So impressed is he with the otterhound's nose, its power and its hardness, that he would like to see one based with every search and rescue organisation in the UK.

"That would be the ultimate for me. It would also give the otterhound a complete role in life. At the moment it's only the showing that's keeping them going, and that's a damn shame because they've got so much to offer."

Jean Fretious, a retired breeder, has some 25 otterhounds at her kennels near Holworthy in Devon and has helped keep the breed going. Unlike Karl, she believes they do make good pets.

"The strength of the breed is that they're totally adaptable and have lovely natures. They love children."

"The only thing against them as pets is their ability to track. As you have to have a secure garden because if they do get a scent of something, they're off. Then again I've had three go off for 24 hours and they all came back."

"I've heard some hunters say they're thick, but I think that's because they only see them doing one job. I find they're extremely intelligent, but you do have to stay one step ahead of them."

"I'm delighted with what Karl Hopton's doing, because this gives the otterhound another outlet. It's a real shot in the arm for the breed."

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Monstrous stone gargoyles keep vigil over an abandoned Gothic mansion.
Do they know the answer to the riddle of why it was never finished?

For some people it is the all-time white elephant, both useless and insatiable. For others it is a priceless architectural jewel. Without question it is unique.

I refer to Woodchester, the Gothic mansion tucked deep among the woods in a valley near Stroud. Begun in 1858, abandoned unfinished in 1871, never completed, adorned by monstrous stone gargoyles, it remains an amazing memorial to the religious enthusiasm of its creator, William Leigh.

A successful merchant and, in middle age, a convert to Roman Catholicism, Leigh set out to create a building that would be not only his own home, but also a replica of a medieval monastic community. Having quarrelled with his first architect, Augustus Pugin (who also designed the House of Commons), he put the project in the hands of a young local man, Benjamin Bucknall, who had been strongly influenced by that master of Gothic revival, Viollet-le-Duc.



DUFF
HART-DAVIS

The result was an immense edifice of pronouncedly Gothic character with the heavy buttresses and steeply pointed arches one would expect in a church, built almost entirely of stone, and incorporating a chapel, a bakery and a brewery. Such was the scale of it, so fine the work of the masons, that rumour claimed Leigh planned it as a sanctuary for the Pope, who at one stage had been driven from the Vatican by revolutionary pressures.

After an initial three-year spurt, construction slowed, and doddled on for another

decade before coming to a halt. Why it stopped, we shall never know. Leigh, living on the rim of the valley only a few hundred yards away, must have gone down a thousand times to see how his new home was progressing, and it must have been with a heavy heart that he called a halt.

Did he run out of money? Was he worried by declining health? Why did his builders leave wooden scaffolding, a ladder and even some of their tools on site?

The roof was on, but many of the windows remained unglazed. For more than a century and a quarter the wind has whistled through the great, gaunt shell - and, paradoxically, the fact that so much air goes through has helped preserve it. Nevertheless, by 1936 rain had started to penetrate the roof, and if Stroud District Council had not stepped in to buy it from the offshore trust which owned it, parts would have collapsed.

Now the building is in the care of the Woodchester Mansion Trust, a band of dedi-

icated volunteers who rent it from the Council for a nominal sum and open it to the public on selected weekends in summer. By raising more than £20,000 a year, to supplement grants from the Council and English Heritage, they have been able to carry out preliminary repairs. They have also installed electricity and running water, and made a few rooms usable for meetings; but their aim is to restore the entire structure.

The cost will be astronomical - £3 million at least - but the Trust, undaunted, recently appointed a practising architect, Robert Stilling, as appeals manager. He aims to attract sponsorship from firms keen to have their names associated with the house, and hopes that day courses will become acceptable as events for people pursuing their own Continued Professional Development.

The mansion is of burning interest to architects, for its unfinished interior displays Victorian building methods in a way that can be seen

nowhere else. It is also used as a centre for masterclasses in stone working techniques.

Yet a visit leaves one astonished by the house's impracticality. Although Bucknall prescribed numerous ventilation shafts, he made no provision for central heating except in the chapel. The single lavatory is high up on the second floor. There is one bath, carved from a single block of stone. The kitchen is tiny, and a day's march from the dining room.

Luckily these deficiencies cause no inconvenience to the four rare species of bats which inhabit the brewery at the back of the house during summer and autumn. So highly thought-of are these, the only residents, that English Nature pays the Trust about £1,500 a year as rent for their lodging.

Enquiries to Robert Stilling, Woodchester Mansion Trust, Old Town Hall, Stroud, Glos GL5 1AP (01453 750455).

Dress: formal. Result: disaster

Something strange happens when we are required to dress up. The more we spend, the worse we look. By Louise Levene

Why do the British dress up so badly? Famous for our sense of occasion we seem to have no sense of occasion wear. Send them a wedding invitation and normally well-dressed women will throw money at something in emerald green with shoulder pads. Stipulate "black tie" and sober suited men will trust themselves into noisy brocade cummerbunds. The nation's wedding photographs are a testament to bad taste and bad spending.

It could be genetic. There could be some deep, inborn reason why British women look less chic the more important the occasion and the more they lavish on the outfit. Ladies Day at Ascot, the wedding pages of *Hello!* and Debenhams's changing room all provide ample opportunity for hilarious disbelief.

Men don't really have this problem. Largely because there is far less latitude in what they can wear to functions. You may not always approve of his ties, but you won't catch Tony Blair in a turquoise edge-to-edge jacket. A suit is a suit. It might not fit very well, but it's unlikely to look ridiculous in the wedding photos. This is the special prerogative of the bride's mother.

The strain of wedding arrangements seems to send an otherwise sensible woman into a tailspin of panic that leaves them gasping for breath in *Selfridges* designer department clutching a black and yellow geometric two-piece with orange piping. More depressing still, *Brides* magazine calculates that the whole shebang will have cost her an average of £300. And she'll probably never wear it again.

Susie Faux, owner of the London shop *Wardrobe*, which prides itself on giving advice to the serious clothes hound, doesn't blame the shopper. "They're shopping in the wrong shops," she asserts, somewhat predictably. "A lot of people will tend to go to department stores. There is never any advice for formal occasions and people either underdress or overdress."

Maybe it's lack of example. The only women in public life sporting distinctive daywear are TV presenters and Members of Parliament – and their dress sense is virtually interchangeable. Sardonically, there is nothing to stop Joan Ruddock becoming a weathergirl and Suzanne Charlton taking over as shadow spokesman on environmental protection. The paintbox palette favoured by women in the public eye features high on Susie Faux's hit list: "Bright colours should be saved for

somewhere where it's hot. They tend to show that a woman's unconfident. They're saying 'I'm not sure that you'll look at me unless I wear a bright colour'."

Clearly, few MPs have availed themselves of Ms Faux's advice. The gaily coloured, boxy collarless jacket (a tailoring dodge presumably dreamed up by someone who couldn't cut their way out of a paper bag) was pioneered by Mrs Thatcher after her makeover by Aquascutum in 1987. Ever since, the only female MP who looks as if she has got up, opened the cupboard, chosen some clothes and slipped them on is Virginia Bottomley. Virtually everyone else looks as if their wardrobe for the day was biked over from Alexon.

The Fuchsia Jacket Syndrome, exemplified by Harriet Harman reaches its glorious apotheosis in Teresa Gorman. Mrs Gorman, whose daywear can be summarised as Escada-a-go-go, clearly approaches every day in the optimistic belief that she will receive a last-minute invitation to a bar-mitzvah in Barnet. This may also explain why Margaret Beckett always looks as if she's just had a run in with a bag of Dolly Mixtures.

But at least she is in no danger of bumping into someone dressed the same. This proverbial sartorial embarrassment occurred repeatedly at this summer's weddings as fashion victim after fashion victim fell prey to the candied charms of the little pink suit. Some of the more fashionable nuptials looked like a Barbie doll convention. This collective unintelligence manifests itself periodically in social fashions and the herd instinct is particularly strong this year. Twenty years ago it was the frilly white blouse and black velvet jacket that upholstered the drinks parties of the middle classes. Today it's that sleeveless security blanket *The Little Black Dress*. Every season, designers announce the death of black and the birth of, say, tangerine and every season the buying public listens politely then tells them where they can stick their tangerine. Black is slimming and it doesn't show the dirt (crucial in a country that spends an average of £19 per family per year on dry cleaning; America spends four times as much).

Susie Faux is a big fan. "The little black dress is the best thing that ever happened to women." Yes, but isn't it just a teensy bit boring? "It's never mattered for men's tuxedos. If only women

could get to that position."

The little black dress has its origins in Parisian thrift. In theory its tasteful anonymity will blind your acquaintance to the fact that you wear the same ebony sack to every festive gathering. The soignée look its wearers have in mind would be all well and good if they were only willing to spend a few bob on their hair. Sadly, the typical Englishwoman's idea of a hairdo is to shampoo it.

Such habitual parsimony characterises the Englishwoman's wardrobe. Susie Faux is merciless in her condemnation of cheap clothes. "You can always tell a cheaper jacket. People who think you can just change the buttons don't know anything about clothes." Ms Faux doesn't reckon you can buy a decent evening dress for a penny less than £500. Sorry I asked.

Menswear can be cheaper. Alan Bennett, an old school Savile Row tailor, reckons that £350 would be the absolute bottom line for an off-the-peg dinner suit. He would, of course, rather you let him make it. This would set you back around £1250 but, unlike most little black dresses, the result would last between 10 and 20 years. Black tie is enjoying something of a renaissance but white tie and tails is in serious decline. Expensive, seldom required and hemmed around by rules and regulations, the unpopularity of the old soup-and-fish is hardly surprising. Hardy Amies' unwitting comedy classic *The Englishman's Boy* is very strict on the matter: "It is not elegant to wear a wristwatch with tails. Sensitive men who lack a 'dress' watch keep their wristwatches in a waistcoat pocket." No wonder white tie parties have become virtually obsolete.

Black tie supposedly allows more "scope for individuality" but this is usually just a euphemism for the hideous waistcoats and bow ties that accompany it. Hardy Amies will have none of this: "You simply cannot wear a scarlet satin tie; it is overwhelmingly 'naïf'. Nor may you wear any coloured or any patterned tie." Black tie abuse reaches its nadir at awards ceremonies. Hugh Grant manages to behave himself but British style gurus are outraged as star twinkles by in Nehru jackets, black shirts, polo necks... Let's hope Hardy Amies isn't watching.

The young can have their fling, but the fling should not go so far as to allow a white tie with a dinner coat," he frets. Tell that to Chris Eubank.

They've got it



When it comes to black tie, don't muck around with novelty ties, patterned waistcoats or Nehru jackets. Follow Hugh Grant's lead and play it straight



From the clothes she wears you wouldn't mistake the Princess of Wales for an MP or a weather girl, whose styles are entirely interchangeable. Note the absence of boxy jackets, gift buttons and orange piping

They haven't



Not only does he wear jodhpurs and lace-up boots, but Chris Eubank is sporting a patterned tie, anathema to the school of classic British dressing subscribed to by Hardy Amies



Julie Goodyear suffers from the Fuchsia Jacket Syndrome, which says 'I'm not sure you'll look at me unless I wear a bright colour'. The dangly earrings may be her trademark but they are also a mistake

Some gifts are more special than others at Christmas.

GERALD SEYMOUR
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Avoid

Fuchsia pink
Any print with flowers bigger than your head
German clothes (Escada or Laurel)

Be wary of

Sleeveless dresses – the upper arms is often rather a grey area at this time of year
Anything with a slit up the back

Remember

If it takes that much hairspray, you haven't had it cut properly
Try to imagine how you will feel about the photos in 10 years' time
Men, ask yourself: Do I look like a professional snooker player? If so, ditch the waistcoat
Women, ask yourself: 'Would Teresa Gorman/ Paula Yates wear this? If the answer is yes, stay at home

the thing about...

The V&A shop

Have you bought your tannenbaum yet? Have you gone through that Victorian ritual of cultural plagiarism that results in the deaths of millions at Norwegian spruces every year? Have you dragged your prey into the living room, taken the paint off the door jambs and scattered needles across the shag-pile where they will defy the Hoover for months?

Good. But it's looking a bit bare just standing there, isn't it? All that green must look rather spartan among the knick-knacks and the cards on the mantelpiece. What you need is some baubles. Many people head for Woolworths or the market and stock up with a job-lot for a fiver. Get the kids to sling them up, sing a couple of carols and bobsleigh's your uncle.

Or, of course, there is a higher plane of Yuletide decor, and it can be found at the V&A.

The thing about the Victoria and Albert Museum is that nobody can fault the taste. The place is stuffed to its elegant rafters with shiny things and cutlucies and silverware worthy of

Ivana Trump, but every piece draws gasps of pleasure from the design-weary public. And its shop is one of the most impressive in the country, arousing lust in all who cross its threshold. Christmas at the V&A shop is a bygone dream. The central aisle is given over to the things you put on Christmas trees: those dangly, spangly and generally OTT evidences that roccoco is alive and living in our hearts.

These are the glass balls, plaster cherubs, antiqued gold acorns, silken tassels, patterned boxes, crackers, trumpeting angels and spun-silk confectations that hang on trees in, say, a Merchant Ivory production of *Flammarion*. They go with spiced wine in tiny silver cups, children from the village singing *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* and the entire servants' hall lining up for their Christmas boxes.

And they are objects that only the artistic rich will buy. Only the artistic rich have the kinds of houses that won't look tawdry by these evidences of exploding fecundity. An ivory-and-gold lozenge five inches deep (£6.50)



needs a tree at least 10ft tall to carry it, which in turn dictates higher-than-average ceilings. Rows of cherubs plucking on harps and blowing on pan pipes don't really go with Ikea seating and fitted carpets.

More important, though, are the costs involved. The thing about the V&A Christmas decorations is that

Tempted by decorations at the Victoria & Albert shop Photo: Kalpesh Lathigra

they'll set you back a groat or two. I'm not saying that they're bad value for money – these are seriously gorgeous examples of their type – but the cheapest item, a robin with real feathers, costs 75p, and those velvet-and-brocade-covered balls run to £6.50.

A red-and-gold dressed Morgana le Fey-style fairy retails at the humbugging price of £37.50. A five-minute trolley dash could easily leave you with little change from £300, and this for fripperies which will be used for three weeks a year and half of which will emerge mysteriously broken from the attic next winter. Then again, those dangling cherubs with musical instruments (£1.25-£2.25) would look lovely hanging from bushes in your garden in summer, and the cardboard boxes covered in medieval tapestry scenes are terrific for reducing toddlers to tears. Go, enjoy, wish you were rich and maybe buy a jolly little putto for the bathroom.

Serena Mackesy

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shopping

If it fails the test, the teddy bear gets it

In a warehouse in Wembley, men in white coats are abusing cuddly toys in the name of safety. By Karen Falconer

Far from Lapland and Father Christmas's diligent elves, men and women in white coats are busily chipping away with little hammers in laboratories: setting light to a teddy here, dropping a lead weight on a plastic aeroplane there, dipping paint scrapings into chemical concoctions. They have no magical powers, sleighs or reindeer, but nonetheless they're doing an essential job to make Christmas fun for children.

These are the modern Father Christmas helpers, the technologists and trading standards officers who check toys to ensure that they don't escape the rigorous safety measures now in place in both Europe and much of the rest of the world, including Hong Kong and China.

All year round they visit factories, laboratories and retail outlets in Britain and the Far East. But the run up to Christmas is the time they have to be particularly attentive, for 55 per cent, or over £800m worth, of all the new toys sold each year leap from the shelves within just a few weeks. And, as the rush rises and popular toys become temporarily extinct, so the chance of inferior, or even dangerous, products slipping through the net increases.

It's when the mainstream retailers under-order for peak periods that problems emerge.

Last year the high street ran out of Power Rangers as what had been a slow-selling toy suddenly became all the rage. Immediately, poor quality fakes flooded on to market stalls and shops set up specially to profit from the Christmas rush.

Too often, at least according to their high-street competitors, these toys are substandard and may not conform to the strict regulations on safe play, inflammability and toxicity.

When I visited the SGS laboratory on a dark industrial estate in the Wembley area, I was expecting to see hordes of toys stacked in piles around the place. Instead, I found a series of laboratories more like a school science lab than a toy workshop, with inconspicuous testing equipment such as a heavy weight on a metal pipe under which toys were placed to see how easily they'd crush. The under-threes plastic truck didn't even creak as it was pounded by the umpteenth kilogram weight.

As a highlight, I was looking forward to seeing a teddy bear burst into flames. Instead, the £4.99 teddy from Woolworth's simply singed as the lighter burnt away at it. It didn't even drip hot plastic. The idea of combing a soft toy with a metal detector also came as a surprise. But a piece of broken needle from a machine can mean disaster for the recipient child - and the producer.



Bear-faced torture: a teddy undergoing trials at the SGS laboratory in Wembley, west London

Photograph: Gerald Lewis

At every stage the processes are finicky and time-consuming. One man has been doing the tests for lead content in paints for 10 years. He sits at a machine, with a scalpel in hand, scrapes off the paint, then dips it into a chemical solution. If there's too much lead, the colour changes. As it needs careful monitoring, it's impossible to automate the process. "We've offered him other jobs," said the floor manager, "but although he's very intelligent and intellectual, he's happy to keep doing this one - and he does it incredibly well."

Another test is that for small parts, in which pieces of a toy are dropped into a throat-sized metal tube to see whether they would block a child's windpipe. But, there are other potential problems to identify: inferior quality stuffings in soft toys, traditionally one of the most problematic areas; infected water in water toys; bad quality plastics; wheels in battery-powered cars that might trap or take off a child's finger. The list is long.

Each year there are around 1,000 reported toy accidents - but experts insist that most of these have nothing to do with the toy itself, but are related to leaving a car where someone will trip on it, or falling with a doll in hand and poking out an eye. Today's fears, they insist, are based on experiences 30 years old. "A 1955 newspaper cutting," says Ian Scott, vice president of the British Toys and Hobby Association "talks about the eyes coming out of teddies. Then they used to be fitted glass on a metal

stem, dipped in glue and stuck in. Now they're locked in with a washer behind. Regulations are becoming so tight now, it's got to a point where it's really silly: before long, the way things are going, it will be a case of toys should be seen and not heard."

Whether that's true or not, it is beyond dispute that some toys do slip through the safety nets. Particularly when money is tight (the toy trade is notoriously slack this year), consumers take more risks and buy away from reputable outlets. A spokesman for the British Standards Institute said that sometimes retailers will report competitors selling inferior goods. "Companies spend a lot of money on making sure that other people's products pass the grade," he said. "The biggest form of policing is self-policing."

Competitors shop people." Bernard Buckley, quality assurance manager at Woolworth, denied this. "We wouldn't shop competitors," he said, and related a tale about a toy he failed recently on grounds of toxicity. "The toy was over the lead limit but I can't tell you what toy it was because someone else is selling it."

Mr Buckley, like other major toy players, is keen to point out how thorough his company's checks are. "We visit Hong Kong twice a year, following the buyers around," he said. "We discuss our findings and any need to modify a new product. The factory will then send us a sample for approval. We review the product and then get a revised sample."

In addition, big retailers and manufacturers normally employ a

third-party safety agency like SGS to keep a regular eye on the factory, including spot checks when most of the product has been packed. "That way we don't ship 30,000 toys only to find them unacceptable when they arrive," said Mr Buckley. Naturally, not every single toy is checked, but if 100 out of 3,000 are checked, the law of probability suggests that the rest should be safe.

Without a doubt, as big businesses controls more and more of the toy industry, there's less and less room for shoddy goods. But, while there's any risk, it's worth watching out for quality criteria recognised by the trade: the European Union's CE mark and the latest mark of authenticity: the British Association of Toy Retailers' little green sticker saying "Approved Lion Mark Retailer".

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Have a politically correct Christmas

It's been the year of shaving Ken, ethnic Barbies and the wheelchair doll. By Sally Williams

It's been a good year for dolly minorities. Take men dolls, for example. Ken had previously always been just Mr Barbie - Barbie's partner at the ball, Barbie's groom at Barbie's wedding. But now Ken is a doll in his own right: as Shaving Ken and Baywatch Ken.

And then there are the black Barbies. Tropical Splash Christie (intended to be African-American, but actually looking Polynesian) hit the scene this year, complete with tropical flower bikini, and some Tropical Splash friends including Teresa (Hispanic) and Kiera (Asian).

Toys that reflect racial and sexual diversity are not new. Sasha multi-ethnic dolls were popular in the Seventies and Barbie's first black friend, Francie, was launched in 1967. Black dolls may not be news, but, says David Coombs, editor of *Toy Trader*, but the fact

that more and more companies are now pushing politically correct lines, is.

Parents wanting to wish their children a Politically Correct Christmas this year can choose, among others: Sindy's first black friend, Crimp & Bead Imani launched this August by Hasbro; the only wheelchair doll - the Little Tikes Wheelchair, Ramp and Friend; a black "drink and wet" baby doll, Aysha, or a soft bodied black baby boy doll, Junior, both recently launched by Hunter Toys. There's also an updated version of Subbuteo, the footballing game, which now includes three black players per team.

Even the aggressive Power Rangers are, in fact, according to David Coombs, "very right on," and not just because they eat in a health food bar. He explains: "One of the girls is Asian, two of the boys are black, and yet the boys do the

same as the girls; and the blacks do the same as the whites. Children watching will identify with both sexes and a wide range of races - and that has to be positive."

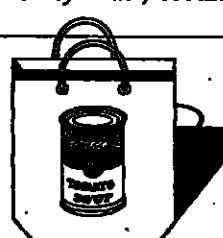
According to David Coombs, the same is true of Pocahontas. "Thanks to Pocahontas, children are now identifying with a Native American Indian." Critics may argue that the doll looks as much like a American Indian as Naomi Campbell, but, says Dave Coombs: "Dolls are aspirational. They depict the person the little girl would like to be, or the person she would like as her friend. Black Barbie may not look like a real black person, but who looks like the blonde, blue-eyed Barbie?"

Nevertheless, a desire to reflect a changing society is what motivates some toy manufacturers to produce more PC toys. "We just believe producing dolls like Aysha and

Junior is a healthy thing to do," said Jimmy Hunter, managing director of Hunter toys. Retailers like John Lewis, Hamleys and Toys R Us agree, but Hunter said more rural outlets can't see the point. "If you live in Forfar, Scotland, you're not going to come across too many Asians or West Indians. It's not that people are racist, it's just that they don't think about it."

This is one of the reasons why blonde Lucy sells better than Aysha, and why Tropical Splash Christie only accounts for 10 per cent of the Tropical Splash range. A couple of years ago Hasbro was forced to withdraw a black Action Man, due to poor sales, so the future for Imani could be bleak.

Not so for Barbie. Mattel has big plans for her in 1996. Perhaps the most radical of all is not the black Baywatch Barbie, but the fact that shop-till-you-drop, disco-dancing Barbie is to become a school teacher.



bazaar

Bestsellers

Top 10 items sold at The Leading Edge

If you are one of those people who gives their friends useless gadgets for Christmas, look no further than your nearest The Leading Edge shop or mail-order catalogue. These were their best-selling products last month:

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1 Miracle thaw defrosting tray | £9.99 |
| 2 Mini shiatsu massager | £29.99 |
| 3 Voice It (memo recorder) | £69.99 |
| 4 FM Sounds mini radio (world's smallest) | £29.99 |
| 5 Turbo massager (uses heat and vibrations) | £149.99 |
| 6 Voice organiser 1024K | £159.99 |
| 7 Living Reef fish tank (with electric fish) | £49.99 |
| 8 Bottle pal (bottle cooler) | £4.99 |
| 9 Flashcard torch (the world's brightest) | £4.99 |
| 10 Nightlight keyring | £14.99 |

The Leading Edge has concessions at Harrods and Selfridges and London shops in Whiteleys, Liverpool Street station and Windsor. For mail-order call 0171-229 3338

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Vac-Man, about £28.99

Vac-Man is the arch-enemy of Stretch Armstrong, from the US cartoon strip. After pumping the air out, his red rubber body can be extended to strange and disgusting lengths, turning him with one deeply therapeutic wrench from a Henry Moore to a Giacometti. Then simply press the vacuum release button on the side of his head and he shrinks back to "normal". The instructions warn against "excessive abuse" but the Independent did manage to puncture its Vac-Man almost immediately. However any damage can be repaired and it should be noted that stiletto heels were involved... From Argos, Toys R Us, Hamleys or any good toy shop



SPECIAL OFFER: A free Vac-Man to the first 10 Independent readers to send a postcard bearing the name of Stretch Armstrong's canine companion to Vac-Man competition, Weekend Dept, The Independent, Canary Wharf, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL.

arts reviews

TELEVISION

Coronation Street (ITV)

Jasper Rees joins 18 million viewers for the soap's first hour-long outing

Does anyone actually believe the television ratings? They seem to be counted by a method that is at once technologically mindboggling and comically primitive. The power surge measured by the National Grid at the end of a popular programme tells them that "x" million cups of tea were brewed as soon as the credits rolled. How do they calculate in a heat wave, when audiences have recourse to libations that don't come out of a kettle?

This necro-scientific headcounting technique claims a week-in, week-out audience for *Coronation Street* that oscillates either side of 18 million. That's more than one Briton in three, which is a lot of Britons. It's a professional risk to confess it, but your correspondent belongs to the 34 million whose movements at 7.30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday cannot be traced. But last night was its first hour-long episode in 35 years – not including the two half-hours that were glued together not long ago to do head-to-head battle with the rescheduled *EastEnders* (OK, I had to do some homework). So like it or not, *Coronation Street* is up for review.

The 18 million are probably so far in that they no longer know nor care whether what they're watching merits enslavement. But coming to it fresh, yes, let's be honest, you can see what all the fuss is about. Of course, being an anniversary edition it may have set snares for virginal prey: for the red carpet of an anniversary double edition, the storyline was presumably richer, the narrative rhythm more deep-breathing. But the welcome felt genuine, though not overdone, as it should in any good pub.

The road test that a soap has to pass is simple: can passengers leap on to the moving vehicle? Whether they want to stay on is of secondary relevance. Within a few lines of dialogue last night the complicated sexual arrangements past and present of several characters had been explained to the Martian newcomer. Des looked particularly active in this department. "If I was getting any more, Jack," he bragged to a bloke called, er, Jack. "I'd have to take a lad on."

Last night, Dirty Des used slightly less practical language to parlay a path into the underwear of the waxen goddess Raquel, who felt so wronged by this wrong'un that she was married on the rebound by Friday. Is it safe to assume the show's not this pacey every episode?

The happy groom is Curly, who has "loser" written all over his pebble lenses. He is presumably so called because one day they knew they would be able to use last night's most phonetically jarring line: "Curly, you're early."

After an hour in their company you feel you've got the measure of these characters. And they must be as fascinating as they seem, because 18 million people can't all be wrong. They can't be immortal either: for every three Britons who pop their clogs, *The Street* loses one viewer. And that's not counting all the emigrations that happen to real people just as much as surplus soap characters. So like a deep lake out of which water is constantly trickling, the audience is in need of perpetual replenishment. It's a very attractive proposition. But a lifetime commitment? Not sure I'm ready for it yet.

MUSIC Barry Douglas Series, Wigmore Hall, London

The Belfast-born pianist proves that he's as much at home in chamber music as in those big concertos. By Anthony Payne



Barry Douglas and Raphael Oleg: building to a perfectly integrated performance

Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra

Not all successful concerto pianists prove themselves equally at home in the more intimate and civilised world of chamber music, although there is hardly a concerto that does not need chamber music skills at some point. Barry Douglas certainly possesses those skills, and his chamber series at the Wigmore Hall opened on Wednesday with a taxing and wide-ranging programme of violin sonatas in which he partnered the equally impressive Raphael Oleg, first prize-winner at the 1986 Tchaikovsky competition.

Both players possess strong interpretative personalities, and during the first half there was a certain amount of jockeying for position as each sought to reconcile his individual perceptions with ensemble requirements. The art of chamber music playing, in which individuality must not be sacrificed, yet must take account of the contributions of others, poses the subtlest of problems, both human and musical, and increasingly Douglas and Oleg came to terms with themselves and the music as the evening progressed.

So many recital programmes adopt chronological principles, opening with a classical item, which often suffers by being used as a warm-up exercise, and progressing through the romantics to the moderns. So the players' reversal of the process here was in itself refreshing. They started with Poulenc's Sonata and immediately arrested our attention by plunging into its turbulent world with no regard for personal safety. The work's bitter and even tragic impetus is intimately bound up with the shooting of Garcia Lorca, and its alternation of protest and nocturnal impressions drew a passionate response from both players. If there

was a sense that each was a little too obsessed with his own part, this gave the interpretation a particularly intense profile, and Poulenc's dislocated final cadence fell perfectly into place.

The Elgar Sonata also drew whole-hearted playing, and the tendency for nobly affirmative lyricism to withdraw into exquisitely inward fancy and regret was fully appreciated. Each player brought an intense perceptiveness to bear but, as in the Poulenc, there was sometimes the feeling that the emotional ebb and flow was not quite synchronised. And it was not until Brahms's A major Sonata that these two outstanding players aligned their insights in a perfectly integrated performance. Somehow from the very outset, with Douglas's wonderfully warm piano sonority and natural impulse underpinning Oleg's freely expanding *cantabile*, things felt right.

This was indeed an interpretation to recall with joy. The complexities, intimacies and far from unclouded serenity were superbly articulated, and the duo's high form was carried through into a vigorous and majestic reading of Beethoven's Sonata in E flat, Op 12 No 3. The sheer newness of Beethoven's cast of thought, as it must have seemed at the close of the 18th century, was re-created in the freshness of Douglas's and Oleg's approach. The grandeur of the Adagio drew playing of complete single-mindedness, and the finale's characteristic brand of high spirits generated an irresistible impetus.

Barry Douglas joins London Winds and Michael Collins, clarinet, tomorrow 4pm, Wigmore Hall, London W1 (0171-935 2141)

TALK

Van Morrison in Conversation

Well, more of a sort of inarticulate speech of the heart, really. By Phil Johnson

The jokes are too easy. Van Morrison talking about his work, talking about his work, talking about his work as part of the Closing Festival for the UK Year of Literature and Writing. It was, after all, a very unlikely concept: Van the man has been known to go whole concerts, whole years even, without speaking to his audience. The idea of him engaging in a little light chit-chat about his motives and methods just about beggared belief. His whole career, you could argue, has been built on silence, exile and cunning as well as a formidable body of music and lyrics that singularly defy interpretation.

The pre-concert stage furniture consisted of two overstuffed armchairs – on loan, one imagined from World of Leather – set down in front of the drum kit as if to represent a little domestic vignette awaiting the likes of George Best and Rodney Marsh. The routine was to be an intimate interview session with the poet Gerald Dawe – an old Belfast schoolchum of Morrison's – asking the questions. They arrived on stage to considerable applause, Dawe tall and academic looking and Van dressed in dark clothes and sporting a full Bobby Charlton.

Where, Dawe began, do you get your ideas for songs or poems? "Well," said Van, "books, newspapers, dreams, there's no set thing." So far, so clear, and when Dawe established the fact of Morrison's father's personal library of nothing but Wild West novels, he had, you thought, hit a resonant chord. Just think of all those Zane Grey hardback covers offering up a virtual world of tumbleweed, cactus and deep mauve sunsets for the imagination of the young Belfast cowboy? But Dawe was, it became clear, somewhat fixated on Yeats (the poet, not the wine lodge), and the more he probed about the great WB's influence, the more Van, who had begun with what was for him incredible openness, became increasingly reticent. Yes, he said, Yeats was one of his influences, but he had written over a hundred songs before he got round to reading him.

The conversation by now more and more reliant on Dawe's prompts, then got around to fillums. Yes, Van said, fillums were important, Brando especially. Then Dawe changed horses suddenly to land thumping on Blake. By now the questions were arriving with a whole queue of subordinate clauses, with Van reduced to surly "Uh-huh" for the answer. "It's like Mutt and Jeff" Dawe conceded before they agreed to an adjournment.

The following concert answered some of the questions more eloquently than Van himself. In a rare live outing for his classic "Madame George" – arguably the best popular song of the century – the most affecting line goes: "the love that loves to love the glove, loves the glove." What, you thought, can you say about that, except that, in the cadences of Morrison's eccentric diction, it assumes a power that on the dead white carapace of the page, can never be revealed. Yeats of course, must have a word for it.

The UK Year of Literature Closing Festival runs to 21 Dec, Ty Llen, Somerset Place, Swansea (01792 652211)



THE PLAY
KNIVES IN HENS

THE FILM
THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

THE CONCERT
SOLTI CONDUCTS BARTOK

THE CHRISTMAS SHOW
THE JUNGLE BOOK

overview

David Harrower's sensual and compelling tale of a 16th-century woman's journey towards love via the power of language in Philip Howard's production, from Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre.

Michael Douglas is a popular Democrat President in election year who starts dating Annette Bening in Rob Reiner's timely comedy about the personal lives of those in public office.

Solti conducted the LSO in a Bartok series including *Bluebeard's Castle* with László Pölner and János Várady, the titular Second Hand Concerto and the Sonata for two pianos and percussion.

Van Morrison's new album follows up last year's *Mezzanine* with a collection of songs from his back catalogue, including a new classic with a new twist, 'The Lion and the Unicorn' by Mervyn Stutter.

critical view

Robert Hanks praised its "unusual assurance, wit and intelligence... Harrower is a name to watch." "The company are clearly inspired as much as we are stimulated," cheered *Time Out*. "With astonishing economy Harrower conjures up a world of drudgery, fear and superstition. Howard directs with great skill," applauded the *Guardian*. "A genuinely original evening," admitted the *Times*.

Adam Mars-Jones felt the slick direction "keeps things spinning along either because he doesn't see the pitfalls... or because he does." "When Harry Truman met Sally – a little pat," observed the *Guardian*. "Rob Reiner's feelgood movie exudes so much sympathy, it sweats," sneered *Time Out*. "The film starts slowly and rarely picks up much speed... this soft boring film," concluded the *Times*.

Robert Maycock was mildly impressed. "At last Solti has lost none of his animal magnetism." "Solti spun a glittering web, impassioned beyond the norm [and] swept many distinct sections up his great dramatic curves... electrifying," approved the *Financial Times*. "There was the crackle of tension in the air right from the start," commented the *Times*.

Van Morrison's new album follows up last year's *Mezzanine* with a collection of songs from his back catalogue, including a new classic with a new twist, 'The Lion and the Unicorn' by Mervyn Stutter.

on view

At the Bush Theatre, London W12 (0181-743 3388)

On general release.

The concert is over but Solti's *Bluebeard's Castle* is still on the forthcoming *Boxing* recording with László Pölner and János Várady.

Van Morrison's new album follows up last year's *Mezzanine* with a collection of songs from his back catalogue, including a new classic with a new twist, 'The Lion and the Unicorn' by Mervyn Stutter.

our view

This tightly-structured 80-minute piece is the theatrical debut of the year.

After *Fatal Attraction*, *Basic Instinct* and *Disclosure*, this is the movie in which Michael Douglas keeps his clothes on. (Saints be praised.)

Bartok noises and fans should sample Solti's recording of the *Concerto for Orchestra* or the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*.

Point that you don't need a new year's resolution to give the kids a good time at the theatre this Christmas.



I was offering her a part in 'Goin' and tried a bit of allure

"So I said to her: 'Listen woman, your life is my life. Your blood is my blood. We are joined together in a union of darkness, and there is no escaping. We are bonded in our strange journey to the creative majesty of Hell.' And you know what she said to me?" "What?" I ask. "She said: 'I'm sorry. What did you say your name was again?'" "Oh God. How big did that make you feel?" "This big," says Steve, pressing his finger and thumb together. "It made me feel as big as the heroes in *The Terror of Tiny Town*."

Everyone roars with laughter at this, except me, for I have never seen the film and have thus missed out on a patently marvellous horror movie joke. "They're very small," explains Steve. "Midgits. It's a midgit movie." "Aah," I chuckle. "We are sitting in the corner of 'the ambient room' of a small central London suite of offices and screening facilities. This is not always the ambient room – it becomes apparent when one's eyes get accustomed to the ambient half-light. It is usually the photocopying room. But they've draped a large, pink

cobweb over the photocopier, and a slightly smaller pink cobweb over the fax/modem, and now 30 horror movie geeks/actors/directors are swapping stories about the day they met Ellen Bancroft, a bit-part actress from the Seventies who appeared in *Dracula's Dog* (aka *Zolan, Hound of Dracula*), and also *Dracula has Risen from the Grave*. This is the Screaming Blue Murder pre-Christmas party. Screaming Blue Murder being a production company for very low-budget horror (Screaming, sex (Blue) and horror (Murder)

movies. They have only been in operation for six months, and their roster is, consequently, slightly limited to date. "We have put money into a splatter film called *Seven Seas of Gore*, a kung-fu film called *My Fist, Your Groin*, and a Far Eastern sex film called *Tiny Tits and the Dragon*," explains Steve, SBM's MD. "Which is how I met Ellen Bancroft. I was offering her a part in *Goin'*, and I thought I'd adopt an air of mystery – you know, bit of allure – and interest her that way. "So I started going on about our blood being each other's

blood. But it was simply the wrong tack, in retrospect." "What did she say?" I ask. "She said." (Steve adopts a seductive French accent). "I am not a horror queen anymore. I am now a tennis queen. I love to play ze game of tennis." "So did you say that you were each other's racquets?" asks a short man from the back. "Joined together in a union of... um... tennis... um... I can't think of a joke. Damn." "He's a script writer," explains Steve. "He wrote *Seven Seas of Gore*. He's always trying to come up with jokes. Poor fellow."

The scriptwriter's name is Alex L'Ocitate: "I don't just write horror," he says. "I've written comedy, surrealism, action-adventure – and I once wrote a powerful psychological thriller called *The Geiger Counter* about an entire family struck down by radiation poisoning, and they slowly turn into mutants. Growing extra heads, you know. Body Horror. Like *The Fly*. But all set in Bristol." "It was great," says Steve. "But we couldn't get funding. Warner Brothers said it was too shocking and original." "Bastards," says Alex.

Death becomes him

Damien Hirst, the art world's golden boy, is breaking into film. Shock, horror. Well, what did you expect? By Jonathan Glancey

The scene is a grand Italianate villa in London's Notting Hill. In the library, two comedians (Eddie Izzard and Keith Allen) are pacing across floorboards trying to tear the soul from one another. Izzard is destined to fly to his death from the library window. This impassioned scene took place earlier this week amid the winter snow watched impassively by Damien Hirst and a gang of young men and women clad in T-shirts, jeans and buckled boots.

What on earth was going on? Damien Hirst was in the middle of making his first film, that's what.

Only last week, Hirst was on stage at the Tate Gallery collecting the prestigious Turner prize. Not yet 30, Hirst has become Britain's most famous (or infamous) artist. He and his cases of pickled animals regularly appear in the columns of the tabloid press. They also appear in such fashionable and institutions as the Saatchi Collection and the Tate Gallery. But can a young iconoclast who has made his name sawing dead cows in half cut a film?

Back in Notting Hill, Eddie Izzard and Keith Allen, both known for uncompromising comedy (but increasingly as serious actors), were engaging not in professional rivalry, but enacting a two-minute 15-second scene from *Is Mr Death In?* Hirst's 20-minute "short" commissioned by the Hayward Gallery and the British Film Institute (BFI). The feature is due to be shown in the Hayward's exhibition *Spellbound: Art and Film* which opens on 22 February next year, 100 years to the day that the first film was shown to the British public.

Hirst is one of several artists (including Peter Greenaway, Ridley Scott, Paula Rego and Douglas Gordon) invited to participate in the Hayward show. The choice of Hirst - famous, controversial, unpredictable - is predictable, but not without risk. For, aside from this month's promotional video for Blur's single "Country House", Hirst has no movie-making experience. What guarantee is there that this canny shark pickler can make good use of celluloid?

What does the film promise? First and foremost an anagram that spells out the name of the

death-obsessed artist. Second, a shooting schedule that spells Damien Hirst, viz: a list of props for the first of five days' filming that begins with "Vomit". The first location is the interior of a Gents'. That's our Damien.

But, while *Is Mr Death In?* has more than its fair share of deaths, disembodied eyeballs, children bayoneting teddy-bears and angst-ridden men smashing lovingly assembled Airfix kits, it also features a gutsy script and equally visceral performances from the cast composed almost entirely of the artist's mates - Izzard, Allen and Trevor Peacock (another Comic Strip veteran).

The producer is Nira Park, another friend of Hirst. Further down the cast list is Katrina Boorman, daughter of the film director John Boorman and current paramour of one Danny Moynihan, art dealer turned musician, and pal of Hirst. ("I believe in nepotism," trilled Boorman to a newspaper diarist this week, "especially if you've got a well-known father. If you can't use your own family, who can you use?"). Hirst's girlfriend, Maia Norman, and his new-born baby, Connor, also appear.

But any suspicion that this is a bunch of luvvies day-tripping to the art world and arty-smarties toying with cinema is dispelled when you watch Hirst at work. Back in Notting Hill, he is a model of beady efficiency. Sitting on the floor among a tangle of cables and film technicians, the artist stares at a small black-and-white Sony video monitor that shows him exactly what his Hayward audience will see come February.

Hirst's concentration, matter-of-factness and bluff good humour are impressive. You might expect the much-hyped creator of all those sawn, pickled and boxed animals to act the prima donna. But he doesn't. A slight, scruffy figure in torn white T-shirt, grubby black jeans, trainers, unkempt hair, day-old stubble and trainers, Hirst says what he wants in as few words as possible, gives credit where credit is due and shows a commonsensical deference to the advice given by his crew.

The day's exchanges are almost entirely restricted to matter-of-fact suggestions for camera angles, minute amendments to

the script, carried out to the assistant director's "Is that alright for you, Damien?" and Hirst's "very good" as each shot is given the final nod. There is no chat (Hirst has no intention of being interviewed: he is in a hurry). There is no smart talk and few jokes because, on a sub-zero December day, time sprints faster than Linford Christie.

Unlike the making of an artwork, no matter how fantastical, the making of a film requires the talents of a large number of disparate people. The director can only ever be first among equals. This is clear in the Notting Hill library. The workmanlike atmosphere could hardly be more different from the hot-house torpor of art galleries and private views.

Hirst has added little to the ready-made set provided by the Notting Hill house, owned by a British banker and his American art collector wife, whose expensive interior was decorated by the famous Milanese architect Ettore Sottsass. Contemporary art, furniture and art books abound. Hirst has added at least one artwork of his own, a "phrenology" head encased in a motorcycle crash helmet, the helmet labelled with the same cranial details as those etched into the ceramic bonce.

The making of *Is Mr Death In?* transforms this aesthetic room into a prosaic factory, the atmosphere laced with smoke from a chimney of Marlboro Lights. Hirst bites his nails and scratches his nose between takes. Film takes so very long, and sometimes even the director seems redundant as scenes are enacted and recorded around him. And, anathema to contemporary artists, film requires compromise.

So, here is Izzard sat at a desk with a metronome ticking away on top of it. Hirst likes this, but the sound mixer (Howie Nicol) isn't happy. So the assistant director (Ben Hughes) proposes one take with the insistent ticking of the metronome and one without. A small episode in the history of film-making, but a big step, presumably, for an artist unused to compromise.

Hirst is notably willing to give his actor chums their head. As a second scene with Izzard, playing a psychiatrist and Allen playing



Top: Damien Hirst, an eye for detail
Below: Izzard, Allen and Hirst take a break during the day-long shoot
Photographs: Lynn Griffiths



Marcus, the psychotic lead, goes through retakes, the actors instinctively turn up the emotional volume.

So, Allen's line as he pushes Izzard back on to a Le Corbusier chaise-longue rises from a *sono voce* "Intellect has fuck all to do with power. Violence is power", to a spitting crescendo, where "Violence is power" shoots across the set like a shell from an 88mm anti-tank gun.

"Like it. Very good," says Hirst impassively, but clearly impressed as his script is lifted from words on a page to drama.

He likes the idea, too, of Izzard clambering across a desktop decorated with Surrealist icons (for cup and saucer, smoothing-iron with spikes etc). In fact he likes this so much he finally gets off the floor to enact Izzard's part.

"But, he'll break the desk lamp and damage the iron," admonishes Ben Hughes. Hirst takes a second look. "Damage the iron? I think the iron's gonna damage Eddie's foot." Funny to see Hirst worrying about safety; if I hadn't been sworn to a vow of film-set silence, I would have liked to say, "I thought art was meant to be dangerous."

The Wednesday shoot draws to a close when the indefatigable Izzard has to leave to appear that evening in his West End show.

Mission accomplished: *Mr Death* is in the can, or at least a good five minutes of him.

So, what's it all about? That would be telling and spoil the surprise, but Hirst's obsession with death and dying haunts his first film, as do images of falling (Eddie Izzard being pushed out of the Notting Hill window) and flying (Keith Allen powering his way into the infinite void in a Spitfire).

What I saw of *Is Mr Death In?* was well crafted and vital. That other people think so too is confirmed by the fact that Hirst has been asked to make a 90-minute film, *God's Games* (starring Dennis Hopper), for Channel 4 next year. What next for the world's most famous shark-pickler - Hollywood and *Jaws Four*?

Spellbound: Art and Film, Hayward Gallery, London, SE1 22 Feb-6 May 1996

In Bill Gates' utopia, we can all be information millionaires

When he was eight years old Bill Gates, His Imperial Highness of Information and Potentate of the PC, settled down to work his way through the 1960 *World Book Encyclopedia*. "I was determined to read straight through every volume," he recalls. "I could have absorbed more if it had been easy to read all the articles about the 16th century in sequence or all the articles pertaining to medicine. Instead I read about 'Garner Snakes', then 'Gary, Indiana', then 'Gas'." He gave up when he reached the P's, apparently, seduced by the superior attractions of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and his first computer. It's rather spooky, don't you think, this picture of childish absorption? The process sounds strangely mechanical, more like downloading than reading. It is most reminiscent of one of those speeded-up educations that malign computers undergo in science-fiction films. You can almost imagine Ma Gates lying in bed at night and asking Pa, as the light goes off, "Did you remember to unplug Bill, dear?"

I have been flicking through Gates's visionary account of the future, *The Road Ahead*. Or, to translate into Geek, I have been randomly accessing a paper document by means of a sequenced laminar storage device. The "book" only has a crude information retrieval system - an unrecognisable alphabetical index - but it was sufficient for what I wanted to do, which was to examine what Bill thinks an electronic future might do for art and culture.

The important point first of all, for any Luddite readers who like to imagine that all of this will pass away, is that Gates is no fool. Hardly needs saying, really, given that his



THOMAS SUTCLIFFE

acuity of foresight has made him rich enough to mount a private moon shot. But it is also clear that he hasn't been seduced by the technology to the point of complete delirium. After several pages of excited discussion about how the publishing future will be virtually frictionless ("friction" is his term for the costs, in labour and money, of disseminating your text), he makes an important concession: "Of course," he writes,

"it's easier to make copies of a document than it is to make it worth reading."

What Gates thinks is worth reading is more difficult to establish. He confesses at one point to "greatly enjoying *The Bridges of Madison County*", which makes the heart sink a bit. But he's a busy man - maybe he couldn't spare the time for anything longer. And there is more promising evidence. In a passage discussing the shortcomings of interactive forms of fiction, Gates makes another concession: "I don't want to choose an ending for *The Great Gatsby* or *La Dolce Vita*. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Federico Fellini have done that for me." This has a little smack of research to it, I think - does Gates really love these works or did his original draft contain an electronic note to his secretary:

"Fill in names of art works here"? Still, Gates also says that he enjoys visiting galleries while on business trips abroad, principally because digital reproduction can never match the original. In other words, all the obvious objections to fantasies about an electronic culture are acknowledged in *The Road Ahead*. Those who think that *Pride and Prejudice* has been an interactive entertainment for 180 years have their fur smoothed flat every now and then by a remark of eminent common sense.

This doesn't mean that Gates is putting the brakes on at all - simply that he occasionally seems to recognise that there is a difference between quantity of information (the thing that really gets him hot) and quality of information (the afterthought

that prevents him boiling over). Deep down, though, he wants to make us all information millionaires and he's convinced that our newfound wealth will release a surge of creativity: "The information highway will open undreamed of artistic and scientific opportunities to a new generation of geniuses," he writes in his most messianic style. He's right, I think, that we are on the verge of a new medium. Real artists will begin to exploit multimedia forms in just the way that artists exploited the novelty of print. But I can't help hoping that the virtues of poverty will also be preserved, that the discipline of squeezing nourishment out of sparse texts will survive alongside the utopia of unlimited browsing in electronic pastures.

how long has this been going on

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books



All you need to know about
the books you meant to read

by Gavin Griffiths

This week:
DON JUAN
by Lord Byron (1819-24)

Plot: This unfinished epic in 16 cantos is the greatest comic poem in the language. Written in eight-line stanzas with a highly elaborate rhyme scheme, it tells of Juan's (pronounced Joo-un) youthful adventures. Byron's hero is not the clapped-out rake of Molière and Mozart; closer to Tom Jones, he stumbles into sexual intrigue, more often the seduced than the seducer.

After hanky-panky with Donna Julia, Juan is exiled from Seville by his mother. His ship is wrecked and Juan is forced to eat his pet spaniel; meanwhile his starving shipmates tuck into his tutor Pedrillo. Eventually Juan lands on a Greek island; he is rescued by Haidee the daughter of a tough pirate; the couple fall in love; her father disapproves: Juan is sold into slavery; Haidee dies of grief.

In Constantinople, the sultana who has bought Juan, wants to capitalise on her investment. Unfortunately she proves to be obsessively jealous and Juan deserts her for the Russian Army. He besieges the city of Ismael and so impresses that he is sent with dispatches to St Petersburg arousing the fathomless appetite of the Empress Catherine. He leaves for England on a diplomatic mission and this enables Byron to set about toffs, country houses and the parochialism of the John Bull mentality.

Theme: The poem is "meant to be a little quickly facetious upon everything" (Byron). It attacks cant and the way individuals prefigure their own motives whilst damning others as hypocrites and snobs. The absurdities of Romanticism are exposed as mankind's highest aspirations are shown to be a prey for biological urges: food

and sex continually cut across fine feeling.

Style: Byron the poet/narrator is the hero. His pyrotechnics with the awkward verse form seem effortless. Rhymes are thrown together with the gentlemanly ease of the Regency buck who must dash off another canto or two before the next glass of claret: "If you think 'twas philosophy that this did/can't help thinking puberty assisted".

Chief strengths: The tone is satiric, farcical, lyric, nostalgic. Byron seems to be in the room laughing at the reader, laughing at the boredom of poetic composition. Underneath all is a restless melancholy: "Statesmen, chiefs, orators, queens, patriots, kings/And dandies are all gone on the wind's wings."

Chief weakness: Some of the digressions are self-indulgent and the poem tends to sprawl: a result, perhaps, of serial publication.

What they thought of it then: Wordsworth thought it "infamous". Keats "flash". The public preferred Byron's serious verse tales, with their beetle-browed outcasts. Only Goethe saw it was a work of "boundless genius".

What we think now: There is still a tendency to believe that comic poetry must be light verse. WH Auden is the poem's most acute critic: "Don Juan is the most original poem in English; nothing like it had ever been written before."

Responsible for: Pushkin's verse novel *Eugene Onegin* and Auden's experiment in the same stanzaic form, "Letter to Lord Byron" (which conclusively demonstrates Byron's pre-eminence).

A passion for little women

Has Lewis Carroll, mathematician and child-fancier, been nailed at last? Miranda Seymour takes his side

Lewis Carroll: A Biography by Morton N Cohen, Macmillan, £25

DEAR PROFESSOR COHEN,

After twenty years of devotion to my work, you must be aware of how little pleasure it affords me to see my pseudonym broadcast to the world. "Lewis Carroll" was the name by which I chose to separate the fanciful works I wrote for the pleasure of children from Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, Mathematical Lecturer at Christ Church, Oxford. You know how I have suffered on the occasions when my "anonym" has been penetrated by determined lion-hunters. Perhaps I should be grateful that you refer to me by my own name, Charles, throughout your long - your over-long - work.

I have read your book attentively. From you, as the editor of my letters and author of several studies of my writings and photography, I would have hoped for less idle speculation and more consideration for my own views. It is not all bad - you are, on some occasions, pleasingly astute - but I am afraid that I smiled at your claim to have shown "the man entire".

I will endeavour to proceed in chronological order, a method which you do not appear to relish. You commence by describing, quite rightly, my happy, productive adolescence, my fondness for my siblings and my parents, my pleasure in contriving word-games, playlets and ballads for the family's entertainment. You mention the bullying which I endured as a schoolboy. I am gratified by your references to my precocity as a mathematician. And yet, towards the middle of the book, you stand the beginning on its head. You make only a passing reference to the shock I suffered when my dear mother died, two days after I entered Oxford. You banish that happy adolescence and present my father as a monster, destined to become a tyrant in Wonderland. What, pray, are the mysterious calamities of my youth to which you obscurely refer? And why do you refuse to accept that the death of my poor father, when I was thirty-six, was "the deepest sorrow I have known in life"? Did you think me insincere when I wrote that?

Having ample time nowadays to study my published letters, I am struck by the similarity between my father's vivid and even violent imagination and my own. While sharing your scorn for those who have perceived the Alice books as sadistic, I am surprised that you have not suggested that my literary style was greatly affected by my father's writing. True, his letters to me are largely unavailable, but even one might have disclosed this to a thoughtful reader.

You are agreeably shrewd and considerate in your discussions of my attachment to children; I am glad that you have not dwelt entirely on my affection for little girls. You are right to draw attention to my love of Blake's *Songs of Innocence*. My feelings were, as I have written elsewhere, sweet and wholesome. When I photographed children in their natural state, or invited them to dine in my rooms, I did so only after obtaining their parents' permission. You know my scorn for Mrs Grundy. Sadly, there were several mothers who cared more for convention than



for the education and love which were all I ever wanted to bestow. "All that matters is what we do for others"; you will recall where I wrote that, I feel sure. I am at a loss to understand why you regard my occasional friendships with young women in their mid-twenties as analogous to my avuncular affection for children of eight or nine. I was never entirely serious, as you find me, when I described myself as "desperate" over the news of a former child-friend's marriage. No matter! We had better approach the subject of the Liddells. You rightly indicate that dear Alice was not always a lovable child. I understand now how strongly she resembled her snobbish, overbearing mother; I had not fully appreciated that at the time. You seek explanations for the estrangement. It was, as you have guessed, her mother's doing.

Certainly, Mrs Liddell looked for someone above a poor lecturer for her daughter - a prince, indeed! It may have been that I offended her by some jesting reference to a marriage between us, the kind of joke which is made to flatter and entertain a little girl. Mrs Liddell had no sense of humour about marriage prospects for her daughters. She regarded me, and all the Dodgsons, as socially inferior. You describe me, correctly, as a shy man and allude to the stammer from which all my family suffered. It would have pleased me if you could have indicated the trouble I took to cure myself and to procure assistance for fellow-sufferers; Mr Rivers, whose son did so much to ease the trauma of shell-shocked poets such as Sassoon and Graves at a very early time, might have been more helpfully mentioned. By enabling me to speak with more confidence, he greatly eased my life. There are respects in which you baffle me. You over-praise my little burlesques and parodies. You are prepared to accept the opinions of others - all most flattering - on my contribution to algebra and determinants. You have delighted me with the way in which you, even more than the excellent Martin Gardner, have penetrated the allusions to college life in the Alice books. I do, however wonder why, when you are so sure that I am describing the real Alice's spirit



Difficulties with girls: Lewis Carroll's fictional Alice is bombarded by playing cards (above) in Alice in Wonderland; (left) Beatrice Hatch, photographed by Carroll against a prospect of white cliffs in 1867

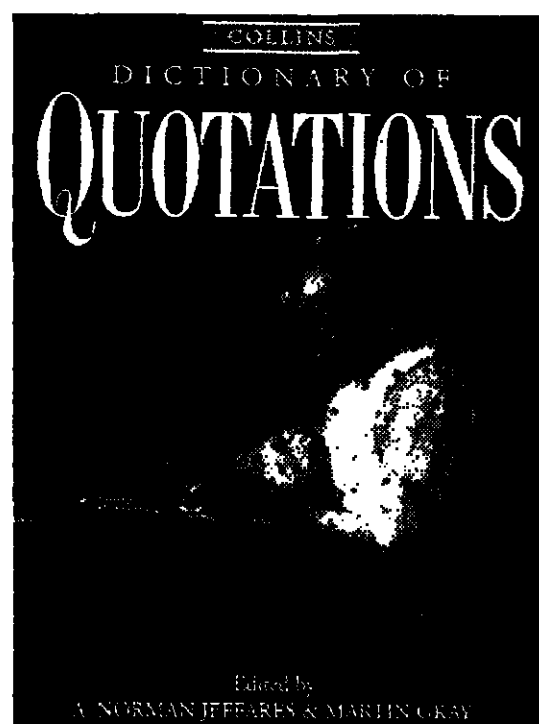
ways and social aspirations through her Looking-Glass journey, you also believe "Alice" to be a portrait of myself? You may persuade your readers of this, but you do not convince me! You are not the first to have a low opinion of the *Sylvie and Bruno* books. They were intended to be entertaining and educational; it seems that they have fallen short of that aspiration. My humour was, perhaps, a little heavy-handed. You know how much I used to fear that the children for whom I devised jokes and conundrums were puzzled and bored by my endeavours to combine instruction with pleasure. But the Snark! May I refresh your memory about the extraordinary way in which you wrote about the poem? You compare it to a symphony or mass. You then invite your readers to memorise the refrain, while comparing the sound of the words "Snark" and "boojum," and conclude: "Together they encompass an extreme range of

contradictions we face with life and death. That is why the Snark was a Boojum, you see." That, Professor Cohen, is among the most nonsensical observations on the poem I have yet been compelled to read. It is a poem about the search for happiness, as I have often written. Nothing more. How ironic to discover that I hastened my death so unwittingly by using the new asbestos fires in my rooms! But I would not have chosen to prolong my existence by many years. The love of an old bachelor for little children had made me something of a laughing-stock. It was growing hard for me to find new child-friends and I was never omnivorous, like a pig. I always liked to pick and choose.

Sincerely yours,

CHARLES DODGSON

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A CASE
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A medical thriller of breathtaking suspense
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Looking for clues

Holmes's creator was a suffragette and a devotee of fairies. Martin Booth reports

Any biographer seeking to do a spot of detective work on the creator of Sherlock Holmes will need either the deductive powers of the master sleuth himself, associates in the world of commercial espionage or the perspicacity and dedication of a latter-day Dr Watson: because the most valuable and comprehensive Doyle archive is closed to prying biographical eyes. What remains are the merest gleanings of a complex and captivating man whose life was as exciting and as intriguing as any of the cases presented to his creation.

Arthur Conan Doyle was the third child and the first son born to Charles and Mary Doyle in Edinburgh in 1859. His mother was 21, his father a civil service architectural clerk in the Office of Works and a Sunday painter of some merit. Despite their genteel impecuniousness, the Doyles gave their children, and especially their first-born son, the best opportunities they could afford. He was taught by his mother to read at an early age and became an avid bookworm. Both parents being intellectually curious, Arthur was encouraged to question whatever he did not understand and to seek always to gain knowledge. At the age of nine, his mother, believing that the local school did not sufficiently cater for her son's Catholicism, sent him to Stonyhurst. It was a financial burden which could have been lifted had Arthur's father agreed to sign away his son as a future priest: fortunately, he chose not to.

A born sportsman, Arthur did better on the pitch than in the classroom but, after a stay in Germany as a language pupil, he returned to Scotland where his parents decided he should enter a safe profession and he enrolled as a medical student at Edinburgh University. Working his way through university as a doctor's

Conan Doyle
by Michael Coren
Bloomsbury, £18.99

assistant, and after a stint as ship's doctor on a whaler, he entered general practice in Plymouth then moved to Southsea where he set up his own surgery, lectured to the Portsmouth Literary and Scientific Society, captained the local cricket club and started to write. His output was prodigious and ranged from short stories in *Boy's Own Paper* to learned articles in *The Lancet*.

In 1885, he married Louise Hawkins, the sister of one of his patients. She was intellectually his inferior and their marriage, although it lasted until her death, was not a loving one. Doyle preserved his true affections for another, Jean Leckie, whom he married after Louise's death. At the same time as he started to write, Doyle became fascinated by spiritualism, a cause he was to espouse for the rest of his life - and one of the greatest enigmas about the man. A rational-thinking scientist by training, by now a lapsed Catholic, he was convinced the soul lived on after death and could materialise through a medium. In later life, Doyle travelled all over the world lecturing on spiritualism and seeking out its frauds, so the true mediums could gain veracity. He also believed in fairies.

Within a year of his marriage, Doyle submitted the first Sherlock Holmes story to London publishers. Two rejected his work but the third paid him £25 for it: "A Study in Scarlet" was published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887. It was the best story in the book, gained critical acclaim and gave birth to one of the world's most endearing literary characters and an entire genre of fiction.

Success spurred Doyle on to other things. He wrote a large corpus of ripping yarns of Imperialist derring-do as well as poetry, plays and studies of spiritualism. Away from the world of letters, he served at the age of 40 as a military doctor in the Boer War, tramped the Flanders trenches, guarded German POWs, took up worthy causes such as the scandalous Edalji affair and the persecution of a medium accused of witchcraft, supported women's suffrage, was seminal in re-writing the divorce laws and was a prime instigator in the foundation of forensic science. In short, Doyle became a national figure, commanding in real terms far higher royalties than any British novelist before or since. He was the first of the literally "best-selling" authors.

Sadly, Coren's biography does not quite live up to the "definitive" label it bears, for it suffers from a paucity of original research. His study is competent but it presents nothing new, relying for its sources on material which has been well picked over in the past, while omitting some pertinent details. The basis for Doyle's construction of Holmes, the true nature of the author's almost fanatical belief in the supernatural and his abandonment of Roman Catholicism, the underlying causes of his fierce patriotism and jingoistic imperialism, not to mention his contributions to medicine (some of which remain valid to this day) are not studied in any real depth. It is as if the biographer himself is arriving in Holmes's study in 221b, Baker Street, to present the barest skeleton of his dilemma to the great man whose role we must accept in extrapolating, assimilating, assessing and interpreting the many clues so as to dress the bones of the case with flesh. The trouble is, of course, we are not Sherlock Holmes, and we need more than clues.

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books

Turbulent dreams of a damaged saint

He was a survivor of Dachau, a brilliant child psychologist — and a suicide. Nicholas Tucker considers Bruno Bettelheim

Bruno Bettelheim: *The Other Side of Madness*, by Nina Sutton, Duckworth, £25

Brilliant mavericks have always been drawn to psychoanalysis but few have ever been so consistently contradictory as the great educator Bruno Bettelheim, who died in 1990. Well known in Freudian circles, he always hid the fact that he never completed a psychoanalytic training and, despite claims to the contrary, possessed no psychology qualifications of any sort.

Famed as a leading therapist for taking on children others had rejected, Bettelheim could also be irascible and violent within the fiercely protected privacy of his own establishment. While bringing out his book *A Good Enough Parent*, he disinherited the daughter with whom he was then bitterly quarrelling. As someone whose mission was to help others stand upon their own feet, he took his life under months of planning — plans in which even a four-year-old grandchild was not spared some of the grisly details.

It is tempting to crow over those self-advised gurus who turn out to be less than perfect. After Bettelheim's suicide, many accusations were made against him, most notably by former pupils from his famous Orthogenic School (taking its cumbersome name from the Greek *orthos* (straight) and *genesis* (origin)). It's a predictable response to round on a father figure who arbitrarily abandons his surrogate children, but there were other ex-pupils who continued to insist that, for them, Dr B remained a revered figure. He was also shown to have exaggerated the concentration camp experiences memorably recorded in his book *The Informed Heart*. But blaming anyone who survived such appalling circumstances for being slightly selective with their memories seems exceptionally harsh. As it was, the recollection of his pre-war year in Dachau and Buchenwald always haunted Bettelheim. He was not the only survivor to end his life in deep depression terminated by suicide.

Like Bettelheim, Nina Sutton, the author of this biography, sees early family tensions as the fundamental determinants of personality. The fact that Bettelheim's mother found him an ugly baby weighs more here than the effects upon him of living in fear of death or torture 35 years later in Dachau. Bettelheim's encounters with anti-Semitism as a child, plus the experience of living in a family racked by the effects of a father suffering from syphilis, are also given prominence in explaining the later bouts of depression and self-hatred he knew so well. Sutton argues her case persuasively. Others might prefer to conclude that Bettelheim was also one of those individuals born with a generally discontented personality whatever their subsequent family history.

Bettelheim saved his life at Dachau by working on latrine duty, which ensured a warm shower in the evening and the absence of close attention from brutal guards. Brought out by foreign supporters in April 1939, just in time to escape penniless to America, he used his experiences as a basis for believing that, whatever the odds, all human beings can make it if only they are given the chance. This conviction led him, in typically paradoxical style, to claim that his period of imprisonment actually did him some good.

It was certainly the only time he never had thoughts about suicide of the type that shadowed the rest of his life, so great was his determination to survive. In America once, faced by pupils thought to be autistic, Bettelheim insisted that, however crazy their behaviour seemed, it still made sense if only its particular personal meaning could be discovered. This

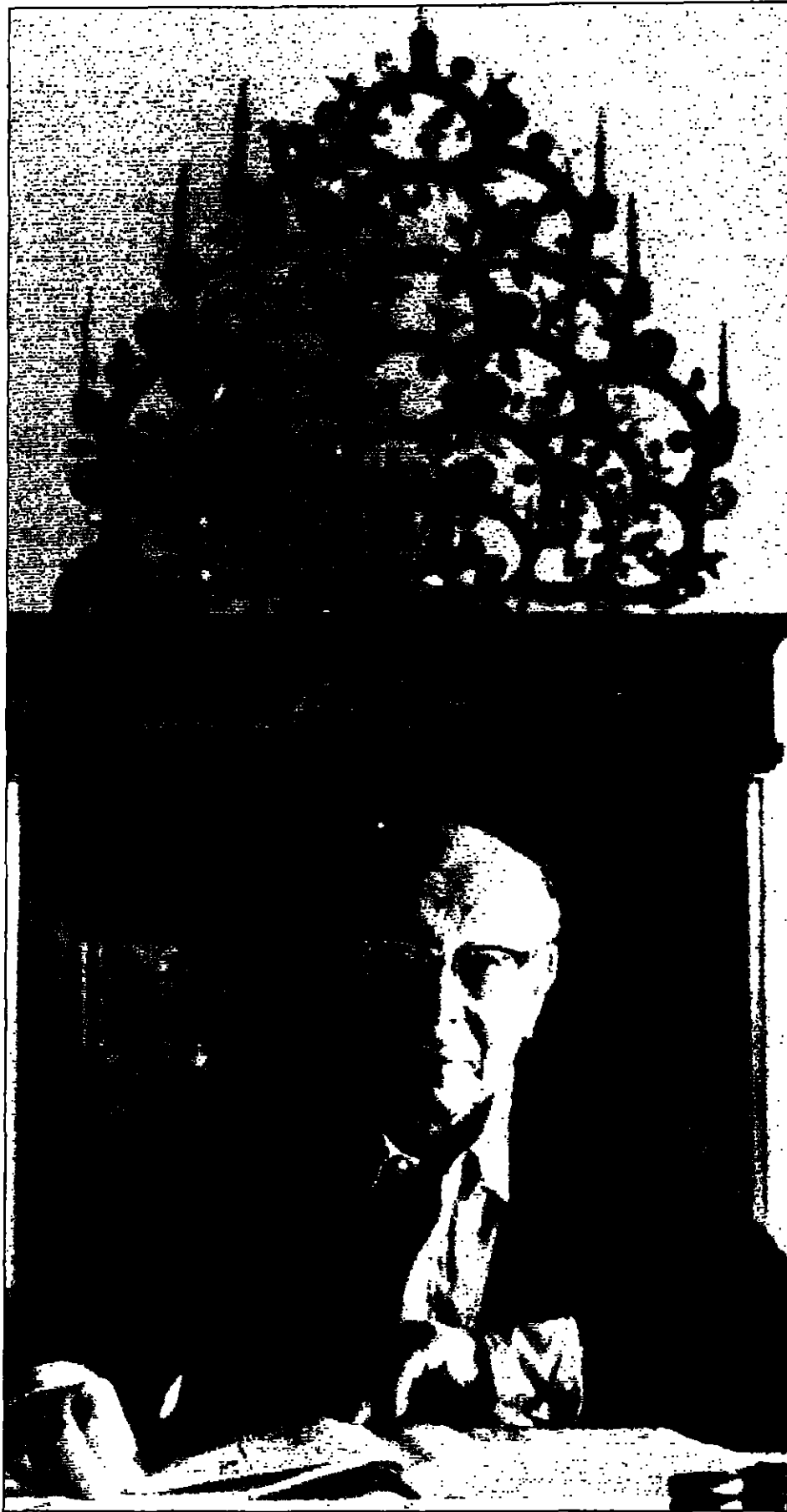
injection of confidence had a most positive effect upon pupils and staff. Undrugged, surrounded by good food, lavishly rewarded with presents on their birthdays, even the most troubled children sometimes gained a new sense of self-respect.

Had Bettelheim left it at that, he could have been closer in his own life to the near-omniscient saint that he appears in his writings. But there was always the desire to impress the rest of the world at all costs, a desire that led to the various falsifications of results that were gleefully picked up on after his death. If he did not cure as many pupils as he claimed, and if severe autism turned out to be more resistant to therapy than he had thought, there was still much to admire in his achievements. Working with disturbed children is very hard and Bettelheim worked harder than most. If just one pupil ultimately triumphed, it was just cause for pride. In fact many of his charges were eventually able to lead contented, productive adult lives; a fine epitaph for a supremely gifted, if flawed, practitioner who, as a fellow Viennese once observed, "had all the trappings of a genius without being one".

Even so, there were many occasions when Bettelheim's views were ahead of his time. Unafraid of controversy, he quarrelled with the kibbutz movement in Israel, urging the return to a model of family life that was later to happen anyway. He committed the ultimate act of defiance against received opinion by attacking Anne Frank's father in print for not doing more to help his family escape from the Nazis. Nor for the first time, Bettelheim was shown to be over-hasty in his judgments, but the points he raised about Jewish passivity in their terrible fate helped lead to a necessary debate. His wholesale endorsement of fairy tales as essential reading for children (in his *The Uses of Enchantment*) was a mighty blow in the war against the insipid reading books once so popular in schools.

Challenging current orthodoxies is always stimulating, and although he was a supporter of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, Bettelheim remained a challenging figure in the field of human relations. The long-suffering staff at his school could never be assured of his automatic support when reporting back about their dealings with a particularly disruptive pupil. Bettelheim might instead suggest that the child was reacting against something a counsellor had unconsciously intimidated themselves. This could be dismaying, but by insisting there was always more to learn for both teacher and pupil, Bettelheim invested even the most humdrum reality with its own dynamic possibilities. Nothing ever appeared dull or obvious in the counselling sessions he held with staff, often late into the night after pupils had eventually gone to sleep.

Nina Sutton describes his turbulent life with clarity and fairness. Written in French and well translated, it is an intriguing story. Whether it warrants over 500 pages is another matter. (Perhaps we need a Society for Promoting Shorter Biographies, to lobby writers who cannot bear to jettison any of the facts they have so laboriously gathered about their subject.) To make matters worse, the index here is a disgrace: a bare list of proper nouns stripped of any helpful ancillary information. But those are my only criticisms of an intelligent study of one of this century's most celebrated writers on child psychology: an awkward angel for some who knew him, a pain in the neck for others, a beguiling enigma for the rest of us.



Bruno Bettelheim: "born with a generally discontented personality"

Coming to grief

Harriet Paterson greets a stunning debut

Rasero

by Francisco Rebollo, trans. by Helen R Lane

Weidenfeld, £16.99

Francisco Rebollo is a Mexican chemistry teacher who threw it all in to write the book he had been dreaming of for ten years. In his delight at leaving the laboratory for the wider shores of literature, Rebollo has produced a huge, bursting novel, filled with life and ideas, with philosophy, science, art, sex and death.

No other time and place is more suitable to such an undertaking than 18th-century Paris: *Rasero* takes us on an extraordinary journey through the years of the Enlightenment and beyond, from Louis Quinze to Bonaparte. Everyone seems to be in it, at least all who most perfectly incarnate the spirit of the age: Diderot, d'Alembert, Mozart and Madame de Pompadour, Danton and Desmoulins.

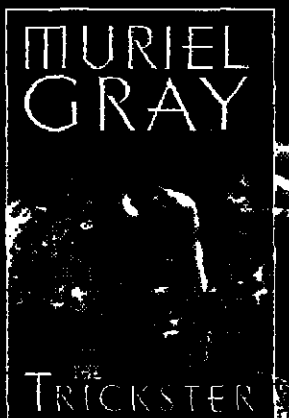
Rebollo offers intimate encounters with each of these figures. Voltaire shuffles around in his slippers, a bright red woolly cap perched on his wig. La Pompadour is ageing badly, with swollen eyelids and puffy cheeks. Each portrait resonates with historical and political fact, yet is alive with gossip detail.

In the manner of *Perfume*, the book plunges straight into the viscera of the age; sweat, blood and pus smear the opening phrases. Diderot lies submerged in one of his endless baths, trying to remove the stench of Vincennes prison, "an odor of urine and burned turds, of garlic and cooking oil, of scorched lime and rancid fish". Only Fausto Rasero can bring him relief, a strange young *émigré* from Spain with a bald head and impenetrable black eyes. Ageless, magnetic and visionary, he is a thoroughly unusual protagonist. His presence refreshes the mind and body of everyone he meets, a revitalising influence who unlocks hopes and desires. He is a polymath, whose ceaseless intellect is matched only by his sensuality. His perfect day consists of a stimulating debate with Voltaire followed by extended lovemaking with a new paramour. Hard to quarrel with that. But there's a hitch: at the moment of sexual climax, Rasero invariably experiences horrifying visions of the 20th century. Not only does this mar the *moment critique*, it also inhibits his intellectual discussions with friends as they conjecture about the future. They expect the progress of knowledge to herald in a brave new world. Rasero knows better, or rather, worse.

Along the way, Rebollo furnishes his setting with exquisite attention to *objets d'art* and canvases from Boucher to Goya; the frivolous rococo *chez* Madame de Pompadour; the dark, frightening paintings and heavy furniture of Rasero's Malagan home. There is plenty of good conversation. The vocabulary is energetic and wide ranging. Indeed, his writing is so fluent and confident, it is hard to remember this is a first novel. He seduces the senses and invigorates the intellect. He conducts experiments with time which create a giant puzzle around his protagonist, until memory and prophecy become fused. Equally at home with Rousseau or a street collector of excrement, he has what all historical writers need, the ability not just to study a subject but to assimilate it completely, so as to move with ease amongst the dead.

'Muriel Gray tells her tale with immense élan. A smashing debut that's gutsier than most authors could ever be...

The Trickster is very good indeed.
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NEW PAPERBACK

New Look at a saga's close

The Cazalet family chronicle ends triumphantly. Sue Gaisford raises a blissful glass

Casting off is what you do when you finish your knitting. It is also what you do in a boat, when setting sail for the open sea. In this, the last of her quartet of novels about the Cazalet family, Elizabeth Jane Howard reassembles her cast, ties them neatly together and sends them off into an unknown future. It is, you might say, satisfactory.

You might also say that it is beautifully written, with the deceptive ease of a fine novelist completely in charge of her material. Her late husband, Kingsley Amis, once said disparagingly of his son Martin that he was incapable of writing the plain sentence. "He finished his drink and left". He could never have said that of her.

Yet behind her simple style lie complex ideas. Sometimes these are expressed in ironic inversions of cliché. Over lunch poor Villy, the abandoned wife of Edward Cazalet, finds comfort in the opportunity to tell her friend Hermione how awful she feels, but Hermione is an incurable pragmatist who proffers innumerable helpful suggestions. Exhausted, Villy escapes, "hedged in

Casting Off
by Elizabeth Jane Howard
Macmillan, £15.99

by possibilities", to Archie, the family friend in whom everyone confides. He feels such sympathy with the whole bunch of them that he can no longer "see the trees for the wood".

Howard is perceptive, both literally, as when describing a "lumpy thrush hauling a worm out of the grass with short, irritable tugs", and more profoundly, as when observing the effects of sorrow. Hugh Cazalet, a widower, is worn down by his loss, by "the effort of trying to turn grief into regret, to live entirely on past nourishment... he had got horribly used to missing her. This was described by other people as getting over it". And Howard appreciates the wild hopes entertained by children of divorcing parents. There is a poignant scene when Villy's little son announces that he knows why his large father has left. It is because

the ceilings are too low: everything could be all right again if they got a taller house.

The story begins with the Labour landslide of 1945 and ends with Indian independence. Public events, however, impinge little on the Cazalets. Soldiers return home and jobs are scarce, the war has battered weary, fog-bound London, but they feel its effects most keenly in their stomachs. Howard's touch is never surer than when writing about food. Rationing produces desperate measures: stewed apple that seems to be full of fingernails, dried egg tasting of prayerbooks. Brown Windsor soup and rugged little fillets of plaice. In a dreary station tea-room there is a mercifully brief encounter with sandwiches that are apparently "writhing with antiquity".

Now and again, people escape — to France, where there are juicy black olives and tomatoes strewn with basil, or to America, land of enormous steaks and unlimited butter — but back home they are still hungry. There is a major shortage of servants so that everyone has to learn to cook: food imagery domi-

nates their thinking. An old man has teeth like the old yellow almonds on a fruitcake; the retired governess at a wedding is arrayed in a suit the colour of blackberry fool; a child's mouth is pale red and translucent, like the skin of a redcurrant.

But in spite of the hardships, they all get on with their lives. They button up their bust-bodices, snap shut their suspenders and slip happily into the New Look, before powdering their noses in public, lighting up their innocent *Passing Clouds*, setting off to see a new actress called Margaret Rutherford in *Blithe Spirit* and, as likely as not, falling in love. At least four love-stories are told, but we care most about plain Clara who most deserves — and happily achieves — bliss.

As her reward approaches, she is finishing writing her first novel. The delightful Archie suggests that she must be pleased, but her pleasure is tinged with sadness that she has created so many characters to whom she must now say goodbye. The reader, coming to the end of this splendid saga, feels much the same.

Who's reading whom?

The artist Maggi Hambling is delving again into E F Benson's collected *Lucia* novels, published as 'Lucia Rising' (Penguin)

It is entirely due to Keith Milow that I became a *Lucia*phile. He put the books my way on a trip to New York in 1991 and I'm now on a third visit to Tilling and Riseholme. I read them in the order that I first met them: 'Miss Mapp in Tilling', 'Queen Lucia in Riseholme', and so on. Once started it's an addiction and I have to complete the cycle. Work-

ing life in the studio is lonely and full of doubt and despair, so it's an enormous pleasure to end the day laughing. Since one of my ambitions is to *die* laughing, I try and get in a bit of practice as I go to sleep. In deepest, deepest gloom I'll read *Just William*, unless I've drunk too much and the words start dancing around on the page.



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Coming
to grief

Boouffant hairstyles, meaty thighs, voluminous bottoms clad in leopardskin lycra, ad hoc enjoyments in karaoke pubs, tango bars, Tenerife nightclubs, south coast promenades, hen parties at the Dolphin Hotel, even (above) the public library – it could only be the

world of Beryl Cook, the nation's most good-hearted self-taught painter. In *Happy Days* (Gollancz, £14.99) her usual Plymouth-based cast of portly good-time girls and plumply self-important men is supplemented by characters from Glasgow and Argentina,

their dignity constantly undercut by Ms Cook's indulgent good humour. Her autobiographical notes and chatty explanations of her technique have an additional charm that is not wholly ingenious. Donald McGill meets Otto Dix.

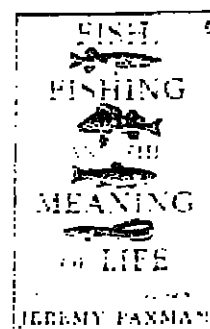
Paperbacks

Reviewed by Emma Hagestadt and Christopher Hirst



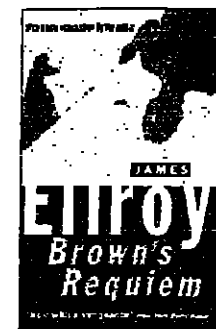
Up North
by Charles Jennings
(Abacus, £6.99)

Sustained by a prodigious intake of curries, a London hack explores an alien land 200 miles up the motorway. Predictably dyspeptic, his report is also a comic *tour de force*. Blackpool, he notes, is "the first place I've been to where the whole town has halitosis." Though generally keen-eyed, Jennings bizarrely insists that Yorkshiremen drink beer in quarter-pint glasses. So how come they get so big?



Fish, Fishing and the Meaning of Life
by Jeremy Paxman
(Penguin, £8.99)

Wriggling politicians are not the only life-form Jeremy likes to hook. While mainly set on the riverbank, his anthology also trawls distant waters. In the section on 'Fish That Bit Back', we learn how *Jaws*-style attacks shocked the US in 1916. In 'Ones That Didn't Get Away', there is an 1839 account of the original Moby Dick. A rich haul, not only for anglers, with Twain and Orwell alongside Walton.



Brown's Requiem
by James Ellroy
(Arrow, £5.99)

Ellroy's first thriller from 1981 updates Chandler with a plotline that zigzags round the freeways and fairways of L.A. Fritz Brown, a music-loving gumshoe with a booze problem, is hired by a slobbish caddy, Fat Dog, to probe his sister's love-life. A tangle of drugs, racism and arson ensues, with the near-psychopathic Brown contributing a hefty dollop of violence. Hard-hitting if derivative.



Lives of the Great
Songs edited by Tim de Lisle
(Penguin, £6.99)

Telling the stories of 40 pop tunes from genesis to interpretation, this *Independent On Sunday* series is as addictive as a box of chocolates. It's the soul numbers – "Take Me to the River", "The Dark End of the Street", – which thunder in your head. Not all the songs are so great. Billy J. Kramer is mocked for rejecting The Beatles' "Yesterday", later to be recorded by 1,186 artists. The funny thing is, Billy J. was right.

Bringing back the author

After years of literary theory, is it safe to speak of 'characters' again? By Michele Roberts

One of the pleasures of reading involves giving free rein to drives of desire and curiosity. To that voyeuristic indulgence, this book adds another: the satisfaction of eavesdropping on its two authors chatting about the novels they enjoy. The reader's sense of eavesdropping is highlighted by the evident delight each speaker takes in her interlocutor's insights and comments. They're happily wrapped up in each other, in the give and take of ideas.

The book was conceived after its two authors met during a discussion on George Eliot at the Cheltenham Festival in 1992, one of whose themes was psychoanalysis and literature. That first conversation led to others, and so to this book, whose editor Rebecca Swift organised the tape-recording and tweaked the final text into shape. The six novels chosen for discussion are *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen, *Villette* by Charlotte Brontë, *Daniel Deronda* by George Eliot, *The Professor's House* by Willa Cather, *An Unofficial Rose* by Iris Murdoch and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. Each dialogue is preceded by a synopsis of the novel under consideration, a page and a half of faintly absurd plot summary. You can't summarise paintings and I don't think you can summarise novels either. A book like *Beloved*, made precisely to investigate the possibilities and failures of languages, cannot be reduced like a sauce. Better to skip the summaries and go straight to the talks they introduce.

Byatt and Soder have set out to recapture and re-experience a fulfilment they believed all readers want: the

Imagining Characters
Six Conversations about Women Writers
by AS Byatt & Ignes Soder
Chatto, £16.99

sheer, simple pleasure of sitting about passionately telling each other what they think about what they read. The rise of literary theory, they appear to suggest, has made the "common reader" (famously addressed as such by Virginia Woolf) lose confidence in his or her capacity to make literary judgments. You could assert the opposite too: that literary theory, having declared the death of the author, has made space for precisely the active, curious reader that Byatt and Soder represent. At the same time, reading has moved back into the public domain after having been seen for so long as a private activity. Literary festivals celebrate not just the notion of the celebrity writer, but the participation of a lively and demanding audience of readers bursting with opinions and questions. One of the charms of this book is that it allows its authors to be both writers and readers at the same time.

Soder, as a psychoanalyst, and Byatt, as a writer who loves storytelling of both the realist and fairytale traditions, believe in personalities, in selves. They can talk about Fanny, the heroine of *Mansfield Park*, as though she were a real person they both know well. This,

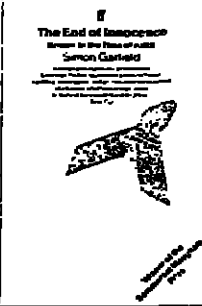
they insist, is how all readers operate, or wish to do. It's only the thought police of literary theory who stress that novels are made of language, that characters represent flows of words. They seek to return to us a lost pleasure, that of indulging in delicious literary gossip about whether we love Fanny or loathe her, just as we might do with a mutual acquaintance. The other fashionable taboo they break is daring to talk about the author's intentions, which are not spelt out in the text and must remain a matter for speculation. They let themselves assert how Jane Austen felt about Christianity, about morality, about the individual characters. It's all shameless good fun. Oddly, however, the more they talk about characters as real people, the more artificial it sounds – treating characters as patients suffering neurotic disorders or helping each other to make mature life choices.

The contribution of psychoanalysis to creative reading seems to lie in its capacity to see a novel as an entire landscape, a geography of connected metaphors whose interplay, often "below" the explicit surface of the text, suggests the weaving of conscious and unconscious in the dreamer's and the writer's minds. This sensitive and generous approach lets Byatt and Soder link writing to the invention in other art forms of the Psychomachia, the battle of the soul. The section "Dream and Fiction," at the end of this enjoyable book, is almost the most interesting. In it, both writers pay passionate homage to the creative process of their chosen fields and to conversation as the best route to profound thought.



The Hounding of John Thomas
by Craig Brown
(Arrow, £5.99)

From Craig Brown's newspaper columns you wouldn't know he was bonkers, but he clearly is. His novel tells the story of John Thomas MP – only son of Lady Chatterley and her lusty gamekeeper (aka Willie Winkie) – from his humble beginnings in a New Heaton grocery shop to the Oxford Union debate where the "disgusting" truth of his dodgy parentage is startlingly revealed. It's the kind of humour that leaves 13-year girls laughing helplessly on the floor.



The End of Innocence
by Simon Garfield
(Faber, £7.99)

Simon Garfield's investigation into Britain's first decade of living with Aids takes a sober look at how the medical and political establishment tried to "de-gay" the virus before it could cope. He relives the initial panic that gripped the nation (health warnings featuring tombstones, fear of unwashed cups in restaurants), but is at his best describing those first few doctors who weren't afraid to grapple with this horrific new disease before it even had a name.



Evelyn Waugh: A Biography
by Selina Hastings
(Minerva, £7.99)

"Poor Evelyn," one of Waugh's women-friends wrote of him late in his life, "he is deeply unhappy – bored from morning till night, and has developed a personality which he hates but cannot escape from." The author of some of the greatest comic novels in the English language wasn't always much fun to be around, but to be fair, there's something rather humourless about the way Hastings has assembled all her dense data. Absorbing stuff, nonetheless.



Mrs Jordan's Profession
by Claire Tomalin
(Penguin, £8.99)

Mrs Jordan was the most popular actress of her day, but unlike her contemporary, Mrs Siddons, her memory was quickly erased from the public mind. A working actress all her life, she got by without great beauty, bore 13 illegitimate children (ten to the Duke of Clarence) and died alone in France, cut off from royal affections. Tomalin's biography brilliantly recaptures a more prodigious age and recounts what must be one of biography's saddest deaths.

Flowing brooks and soupy pedals

What did Romanticism mean to Schubert and Liszt? Graham Johnson weighs the evidence

For the German writer Novalis, the essence of Romanticism was "to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar". *The Romantic Generation*, by the distinguished American pianist and critic Charles Rosen, seems to share this achievement. The book is an impressive attempt to make sense of the cultural movement which gave us Schubert and Schumann, Chopin and Liszt, and it does so in part by placing these composers in the context of far less famous writers of the period.

Rosen gives long overdue recognition to the importance of the song cycle as "the most original musical form created in the first half of the 19th century". For him, it "most clearly embodies the Romantic conception of experience as a gradual unfolding and illumination of reality in the place of Classical insistence on initial clarity". In a discussion of Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*, he compares the song cycles' sense of slowly coming into focus with the landscape descriptions of writers such as Etienne Pivert de Séanacour (little known now, but a cult figure in his day), for whom Romanticism was embodied by moments such as these: "When the October sun appears in the mist over the yellowing

The Romantic Generation
by Charles Rosen
HarperCollins, £30

woods; when a small brook flows and falls in a field closed by trees, as the moon sets; when, under the summer sky on a cloudless day, a woman's voice sings, a little distant, at four o'clock in the midst of the walls and roofs of a large city...

As a song accompanist, I find Rosen's literary sensibility refreshing but I was surprised that he gave little recognition to the way in which, in song composition, certain musical patterns and shapes come into being through verbal imagery. His comments on performance, however, are precise and illuminating: for example, he argues that pianists should avoid too much soupy pedal in Schubert; it should be treated, not as the norm, but as a special effect.

Though Schubert's shadow is a constant presence throughout, the book is dominated by Schumann and Chopin, with shorter chapters on Berlioz and Mendelssohn, and walk-on parts for Bellini and Meyerbeer. The single

chapter on Liszt strikes me as one of the finest explications ever written of his genius: unlike Liszt's more faint-hearted apologists, Rosen doesn't try to deny the composer's flashiness and charlatanism, which he acknowledges as an integral part of the package.

Rosen's breadth of learning in so many disciplines is awesome, and he creates powerful syntheses out of diverse threads. Yet at the same time he can be capricious, even eccentric. To discuss Romantic landscape with an in-depth analysis of Louis Ramond de Carbonnières and Aurelio di Giorgio Bertola but hardly a mention of Caspar David Friedrich seems almost perverse. One feels that he hasn't quite decided whom he's writing for: at one moment he is explaining that Es is the German for E flat; next, he's assuming his audience can read effortlessly from the printed musical examples.

Though the amateur may sometimes feel perplexed and excluded, this tour of the Romantic landscape is worth the occasional discomfort. It's a small price to pay for the dazzling insights which illuminate the text like lightning. There are paragraphs in this book I would gladly pay £30 for – much less than the cost of a lesson with a master pianist.

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gardening



A waxy crassula isn't just for Christmas

Anna Pavord suggests presents for the green of finger

Perhaps it is the lack of chimneys in modern homes that has forced Santa to transfer his attention to garden centres. At this time of the year, garden centre grottoes spring up faster than mushrooms. Stranded between the compost and the chemicals are hasty constructions of picket fences, borrowed from the outdoor leisure department and scantily disguised with plastic snow. "Last grotto session 2.15-4pm" said a notice stuck to the hovel in our local garden centre. It made Santa sound like the local MP, doing his constituency surgeries. He arrived here (S not MP) in a flurry of helicopter blades on 18 November. The helicopter is a fair enough trade-off for the sleigh, given the price of reindeer feed, but November! They had scarcely got rid of Guy Fawkes.

I was there swooping up a few plants to turn into Christmas presents. It is one of the miracles of modern life that you can still buy a steely blue echeveria, a kalanchoe with leaves as furry as a teddy bear or a waxy crassula for only 99p. Planted up in old bowls or baskets, which you can pick up in junk shops and charity shops, these make remarkably settled little worlds. You can do desert (in which case go for the three above) or damp. Damp displays do well in bathrooms, or any place where the light is rather diffuse. Use ferns, ivies and some of the superb begonias in garden centres now, with lopsided leaves painted in bronze, pink and silver.

Twig brooms or besoms are good value too – only £3.99. Difficult to wrap, I know, but you could do what *Gardens Illustrated* did in a recent

feature and turn them into scarecrows. For arms, tie a crosspiece under the broom bit, which becomes the head. Then you could dress the scarecrow in a sackcloth, decorated with packets of seeds and bags of small bulbs. Twenty Anemone de Caen Single Blue cost only £1.49. There's another staggering bargain. Christmas is late to plant them, but they are used to growing at odd times and will oblige.

For the more severely practical gardener, you could buy a DIY mushroom kit for £3.99. I have a sneaking desire to have one myself. The way mushrooms grow, swelling quietly at dawn out of the damp, dark blanket of compost around them, is intriguing. Think, too, of a bacon breakfast in the New Year and the pleasure of being able to gather a handful of your own mushrooms to sizzle in the pan.

Ned Trier does something rather more glamorous. He offers a 'Truffle Lovers' Kit: an oak sapling (oak is the truffle's preferred haunt), a chocolate truffle-hunting pig to help you root out the truffles (if you can ever encourage any to grow, which is doubtful) and half a pound of the best chocolate truffles to help you get over your disappointment if you don't succeed. The kit costs £25. For the same price, you could order That Old Chestnut, a slatted wooden box containing a sweet chestnut tree, a box of succulent marrons glacés and recipes for your own chestnut harvest. Available from Ned Trier Gardens, 82 Wandsworth Bridge Road, London SW6 2TF (0171-371 0775). They can send presents for you for an extra £6.

Touch Design can send a flat-backed glass

wall vase, 17cm tall, 13cm wide at the neck (it is gently cone shaped) and 8.5cm across from the flat back to the curved front, price £20.50. This is just the right size to drop in the stray handfuls of flowers that the garden provides at this season: marbled arums with spikes of jasmine, the first freckled hellebores, some spikes of smelly viburnum. They also do a glass flowerpot, 11.5cm tall for £10.35. This is severely impractical, but there is a certain fascination in seeing how the roots of things are coming along. The pot is too small for amaryllis, which look stunning in glass containers, but you could squeeze in a few *Iris reticulata*. Touch Design is at PO Box 60, Andover, Hampshire SP11 6SS (01264 738060). Fragile orders will be hand delivered at an extra cost of £5.50.

Verdigris make copper plant tags soft enough for you to write on with a ballpoint. Ink fades, but this impression is fixed permanently. You can buy fat T-shaped labels, 5cm high by 3.5cm across, which are ideal for herb gardens, pot plants, window boxes and vegetable gardens. They cost £3.49 for a pack of 15. Tie-on copper plant tags, 11.5cm long by 2cm wide have a hole at one end, threaded with copper wire, £4.75 for a pack of 15. These can easily be fixed on roses, climbing plants, small trees and shrubs. They are widely available. In London, try Fulham Palace Garden Centre, The Conran Shop or After Noah, Upper Street, London N1. For other stockists call 01438 869346.

Sussex trugs, shallow curved wood baskets, first took off at the Great Exhibition of 1851, when Queen Victoria ordered several from

Thomas Smith of Herstmonceux to give as presents to members of the Royal Household. Smith was so proud of the order that he walked the 60 miles to Buckingham Palace with his handcart, to deliver them personally.

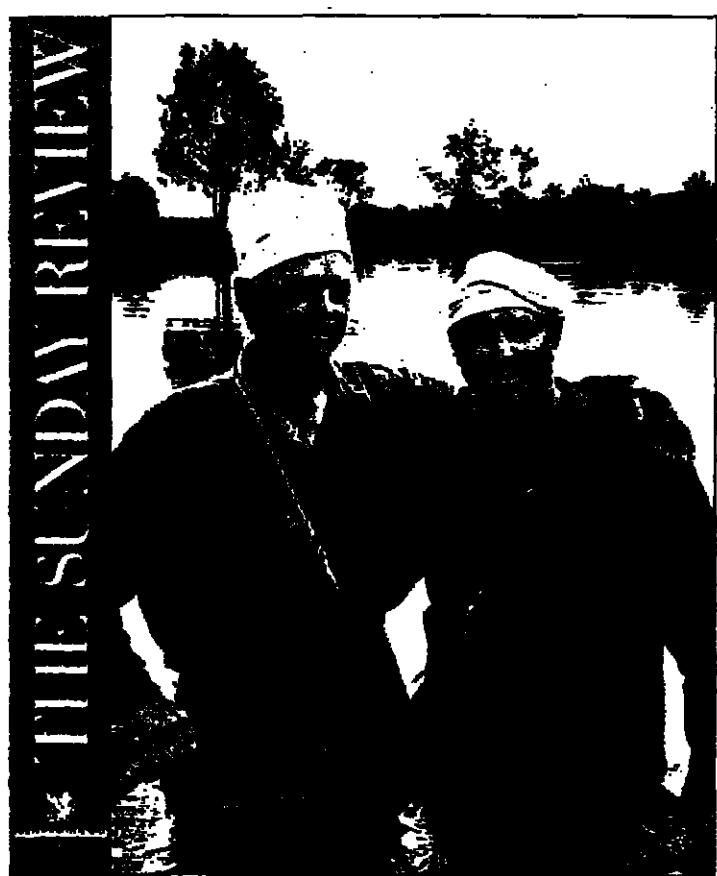
I use one to carry garden tools about, another as a kind of In Tray – except that nothing ever goes out of it – and a third for gathering potatoes. Trugs are like that. You can always find a reason to have another. The original Sussex trug, as invented by Thomas Smith, with a handle and rim of sweet chestnut and boards of cricket bar willow, is available from Thomas Smith's Trug Shop, Hailsham Road, Herstmonceux, East Sussex (01323 832137). Prices start from £23.60 (including p&p). Other styles, made from Finnish birch ply with coloured trims, are also available.

For less than £20 you could order the Christmas Collection of plants from the nursery Wootton's of Wenaston. Given the right weather, these four might even be in flower on Christmas Day. The collection includes *Veronica peduncularis* 'Georgia Blue', recently introduced from the Caucasus by Roy Lancaster. I had this plant from Roy and it is a very good doer, spreading rapidly to make a prostrate mat, covered with blue flowers. Sweet box, *Sarcococca confusa*, has insignificant white flowers among its dark evergreen leaves but smells like a scent shop. The Christmas rose, *Helleborus niger* is an old favourite, as is the fourth plant in the collection, *Iris unguicularis*. "Suppose a wicked uncle who wished to check your gardening zeal left you pots of money on condi-

tion you grew only one species of plant. What would you choose?" asked the Edwardian plantsman, E A Bowles. He chose this iris. Wootton's of Wenaston is at Blackheath, Wenaston, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 9HD (01502 478258). The collection costs £14.80 if you collect it, or £19.80 by mail order.

Books to look out for include *A Handful of Flowers*, an anthology of verse and prose with wood engravings by Yvonne Skargon, £9.95 from Colt Books, 9 Clarendon Road, Cambridge CB2 2BH (01223 329059) and *Harvesting the edge* by g f dutton, who does everything in lower case like e e cummings. This man, scientist, gardener, poet, has spent most of his life among what he calls the "passionate austerities" of Scotland, balancing on the knife blade between nature and culture in his marginal garden on the slopes of the southeastern Highlands. His book is published by the Menard Press, £8.99.

A book that you'll need two copies of, because once you've seen it, you won't be able to give it away, is *A Corner of England*, North Devon landscapes and people photographed by James Ravilious (Devon Books/The Lutterworth Press, £19.95). Here is a ruined cob barn, looking like a prehistoric adobe shelter. Here is Archie Parkhouse surveying his pig, knee deep in her trough, with the quiet pleasure of a Lord Emsworth at Blandings. Here is the churchyard at Shobrooke, the gravestones standing stark as sentries in the cold winter light. Avoiding nostalgia, embracing stoicism, these are powerful images.



Back to work at Chernobyl: almost 10 years after the catastrophe, Richard D North asks whether it is such a bad place to live

Bras, panties, stockings and suspender belts: Kelly Klein presents a spectacular history of underwear

Plus: Robert Cushman on panto; and the saga of the serial suicides

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

CUTTINGS



Plant names; how to save a rare vegetable; a Polish garden photographed

No good can come of association with anything labelled Gwladys or Ysobel or Ethyl or Mabelle or Kathryn. But particularly Gwladys, wrote P G Wodehouse. Pauline and David Harshorn's *Directory of First Name Plants*, however, will lead you to names you do want to remember. There are two Tristrams, one an ivy, the other a sempervivum, and two Charleses, one a dianthus, the other a tulip. Flatterers might choose 'Big Charles', which is a fuchsia. The possibilities for coded messages are endless.

The directory costs £2 (incl. p&p) and can be ordered direct from D and P Harshorn, Nonesuch Cottage, Badby, Northants NN11 3AW.

Adopt a vegetable" is the plea from the Henry Doubleday Research Association, which is concerned about the limited number of vegetable varieties now available to gardeners. Since the 1970s EEC regulations have required that all varieties of vegetable be registered. But each registration costs several hundred pounds

and seedsmen can only recoup the cost of registration on the best-selling varieties.

Because of increasing pressure on marginal varieties, the HDRA wants to expand its seed library and is asking for sponsors to adopt a vegetable and secure its survival. For £12.50 a year, you could take on the 'Snow White Cherry' tomato or 'Mr Lenthall's' broad bean. For a sponsor form, contact the HDRA at Ryton Organic Gardens, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Coventry CV8 3LG (01203 303517).

Just opened at the Polish Cultural Institute, 34 Portland Place, London, is an exhibition of photographs of Arkadia, a garden of 30 hectares near Nieborow in Poland. Arkadia was originally laid out between 1778-1821 for the Princess Helena Radziwill. Its features include a lake, the artificial ruins of an aqueduct and a Temple of Diana. An extensive restoration of the garden is now being carried out. The exhibition, which runs until 24 Jan is open Mon-Fri 10-4 (Thursdays 10-8).

Join now while stocks last

The Royal Horticultural Society isn't the only one giving away seeds. By Clare Stewart

Free seeds! It's the sort of offer you expect to see glued to the front of the first issue of *Everything You Need to Know about Gardening* – a complete guide in 97 weekly instalments, plus handy binder.

But free seeds from the Royal Horticultural Society are a very different matter. These seeds do not come bundled into packets of old fashioned favourites – two parts thistle to one part candytuft. Instead the RHS's long established seed distribution service offers a comprehensive list to whet the appetite of even the most jaded of propagators.

Strictly speaking, the service is not free, being for RHS members only. But for just the price of the postage (£2.50) the 200,000 members can apply for 20 packets of seed choosing from an extensive list that covers alpine, annuals, shrubs, trees and perennials.

The practice of giving out the surplus seed gathered from the gardens at Wisley dates back to 1943, when the RHS was asked to help the war

effort by distributing vegetable seeds. Surprisingly perhaps, the service continues and has not gone the way of free school milk or eye tests. Now the Wisley team sends out more than half a million packets annually to members all round the world.

For 1996 the RHS list runs to 949 choices. The summer's hot weather was good news for Wisley's sun worshippers, the plants from Mediterranean and other hot climates which flowered well and produced more seed than usual. *Fremontodendron californicum* with its showy yellow flowers is one of the summer's successes says Marion Cox, who runs the distribution service. The daisy flowered osteospermum and arctotis also thrived in the heat. This year's list also features 21 different salvias. Among the perennial favourites, delphiniums regularly top the list with aquilegia, hellebores and meconopsis in strong demand.

Seed is collected from open pollinated plants in the gardens as well

as the glasshouses at Wisley, which means there are plants suitable for the house or conservatory.

Application forms for seeds have to be in by 29 December and seeds are dispatched between January and April. Although only a small proportion of the RHS's 200,000 members apply, this year it is expected to be oversubscribed, so it is important to list plenty of alternative choices. Some seeds are only available in small quantities. Among these are rarer plants such as the alpine penstemons and spring bulbs such as *Fritillaria acmopetala*.

The RHS is not the only society to offer free or very low cost seeds. The Hardy Plant Society, for example, where there is a £10 annual fee, offers up to 15 packets of seed, with only the postage costs to pay. The seed is all donated by members, and this year the list runs to over 2,600 species and varieties.

Other groups offering seeds include the Alpine Garden Society (annual membership £15), and the

Cyclamen Society (£5 a year). The Cottage Garden Society (£5 a year) offers a choice of 2,500 varieties, and as with the other groups the only charge is for postage.

If you are looking to join one of the groups or to buy membership as a Christmas present for someone else, it is important to do so before the end of December if you want to take advantage of seed distribution.

RHS membership costs £36, from the Membership Dept, The RHS, PO Box 313, London SW1P 2PE. For a Christmas membership gift-pack call 0171-821 3000 as soon as possible. For the RHS seed list, send an SAE (9x6in) to Seed Applications, RHS Garden, Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB (0171-834 4333). Hardy Plant Society, 01386 7103317. Alpine Garden Society, 01386 554 790. Cyclamen Society, 01580 4240221. Cottage Garden Society, 01270 250776.

سبکنا من الاله

By Anne Spackman

One of Bee Bee Development's warehouse apartments in Northburgh Street, Clerkenwell. Five out of 12 have sold since going on the market last month. Photo: Jane Baker

Dorset/Hampshire

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travel uk

£1.20 buys you a seat on the 38 bus

Simon Calder takes the 38 bus from Victoria to Clapton Pond

Britain's best tourism bargain is red, 14ft 6in high and holds 77 passengers (though the last five on must stand). A one-way ticket costs £1.20 for adults, 30p for children and nothing at all for senior citizens. Catch the number 38 bus on the long and winding bus lane past Buckingham Palace and the Ball's Pond Road. On a good day it covers the seven miles in under an hour, and reveals a startling cross-section of the capital.

Ever since the terminus was completed, opulence has been wearing off Victoria Station; important international trains now terminate at Waterloo. Skipping and slipping over split diesel in the squalid shed that passes as a bus station, you should find a 38 waiting in bay 1. One leaves at least every six minutes during the day, the timetable says, though people shivering at stops along the way might dispute such confidence.

Except on Sundays (when a nasty modern vehicle is substituted), the 38 route is piloted by the Routemaster. This icon of transport design was built specifically for the capital, though the modest double-decker has since found employment as far away as Sri Lanka. The Routemaster began running in 1954, and since then no one has come up with a better vehicle for the city's streets. Its lines are clean, its curves graceful and its open platform an ideal solution to traffic congestion – gridlocked passengers can just hop off.

Four sets of traffic lights in the first quarter-mile provide plenty of opportunities for latecomers to step aboard. Suddenly the shambles around the station gives way to the back garden of a large private house. Upper-deck passengers get a view denied to all but Garden Party invitees.

Grab the front seat, and you see the theory behind the regal sweep into Hyde Park, now disfigured by a swirl of vehicles. Pride of place is seized by the Winged Victory of Samothrace, a chariot swooping above the arch celebrating victory in the Great War.

The imperious sandstone of the building by the park gate bears the address: Number One, London. This Robert Adam mansion, officially known as Apsley House, was built for the Duke of Wellington in the 1770s. It was the centrepiece of a grand neo-classical terrace at the western entrance to Westminster, but the neighbours were demolished in the same

1960s bout of insanity that caused Hyde Park Corner to be degraded to the capital's biggest gyratory system. The house re-opened this summer and contains one of London's least-known collections of fine art. Its address stems from when a toll-booth greeted visitors from the west; Apsley House was the first structure you reached.

These days, everyone racing in from the west congeals in the traffic here. Hello, Piccadilly: what in most cities would be a grand prospect ends up being the last leg of the M4 motorway. The majesty of the street is evident only to those on the top deck, who can discern the grand underlying theme to the half-mile-long approach to the Circus.

One in nine of all the buses everywhere in Greater London passes Piccadilly Circus, making it the hub of London Transport's operations. Inbound buses now have to take a long detour, but your outbound bus slices straight past Eros and on to Shaftesbury Avenue – arguably the world centre of commercial drama. You pass only three theatres, since most of the theatrical West End is north and south of here. A more striking image is the first cross-cultural encounter coming up on the right, as you brush up against Chinatown. The stretch from Cambridge Circus past newly-listed Centrepont and into New Oxford Street is plain urban vulgarity.

Crossing Southampton Row, look to the right for the trash-laden entrance to the old tram tunnel that once provided a fast track through the capital. The least said about the conglomeration of 1960s bad ideas along Theobald's Road, the better. It is redeemed first by number five, DJM House, the imposing town house where Elton John first made his musical way in the world. Since the pop publisher Dick James Music went into decline, a public relations company has taken it over and installed a natty bar at street level – but only for staff and clients. Adjacent, the expansive acres of Gray's Inn Gardens are also closed to ordinary mortals.

Rosebery Avenue, where you sweep left, is not just the most misspelled street on the 38 route – it also conceals some underground wonders. First, the sorting office at Mount Pleasant is Britain's biggest, and the heart of the Post Office's private tube line. Next, the headquarters of Thames Water is a collusion of buildings and earthworks known as New

River Head, so called because some Victorian plumbing on a monstrous scale diverted an underwater channel here. On a more modest scale, a plaque on the ornate Finsbury Town Hall informs you it was the place that elected the first Asian to the House of Commons: Dadabhai Naoraji represented Central Finsbury for the Liberals in the 1890s. Opposite, the British HQ of Amnesty International marks but one of several noble causes whose offices are located on the corner of Amwell Street.

The Angel, Islington costs £120 on the Monopoly board, but these days it looks overpriced. Any angelic properties have been submerged beneath one of the capital's scruffier crossroads. More inappropriate names are just ahead: Upper Street is middle-class, and Essex Road doesn't go to the county. It does, however, mark the boundary into Zone 2 of the capital's transport system. There could easily be a sign warning "Now entering suburbia". The landscape changes, the street furniture becomes more unpredictable. Off to the left, a hut promising Quality Shellfish carries a perfunctory explanation for being closed: "When not here, gone fishing for them."

Essex Road is often a river of red. The 73 bus seems to be breeding in Stoke Newington, judging from the number of them trawling for passengers and jostling with the 38 for road space. The best breathing space is the broad sweep of Annet's Crescent, receding elegantly from the thoroughfare.

Ball's Pond Road begins unpromisingly, but give it a chance and it suddenly becomes the most splendid street on the 38 route. On the right, Brunswick Place is a terrace that seems to stretch forever, tainted only by a couple of factories bolted on to the western end. Left, the site which the Metropolitan Benefit Societies chose to build almshouses with the grace of palaces. The dwellings, arranged daintily around a courtyard, are protected by arrogant chimneys that battle for prominence with a festoon of turrets, every one a miniature folly.

"Building with religious use for sale" announces the sign on an abandoned church, summing up the ethnic wealth of east London. It might become a mosque or a temple; the worship possibilities are endless in a quarter where the Hackney Cypriot Community Association sits next to the

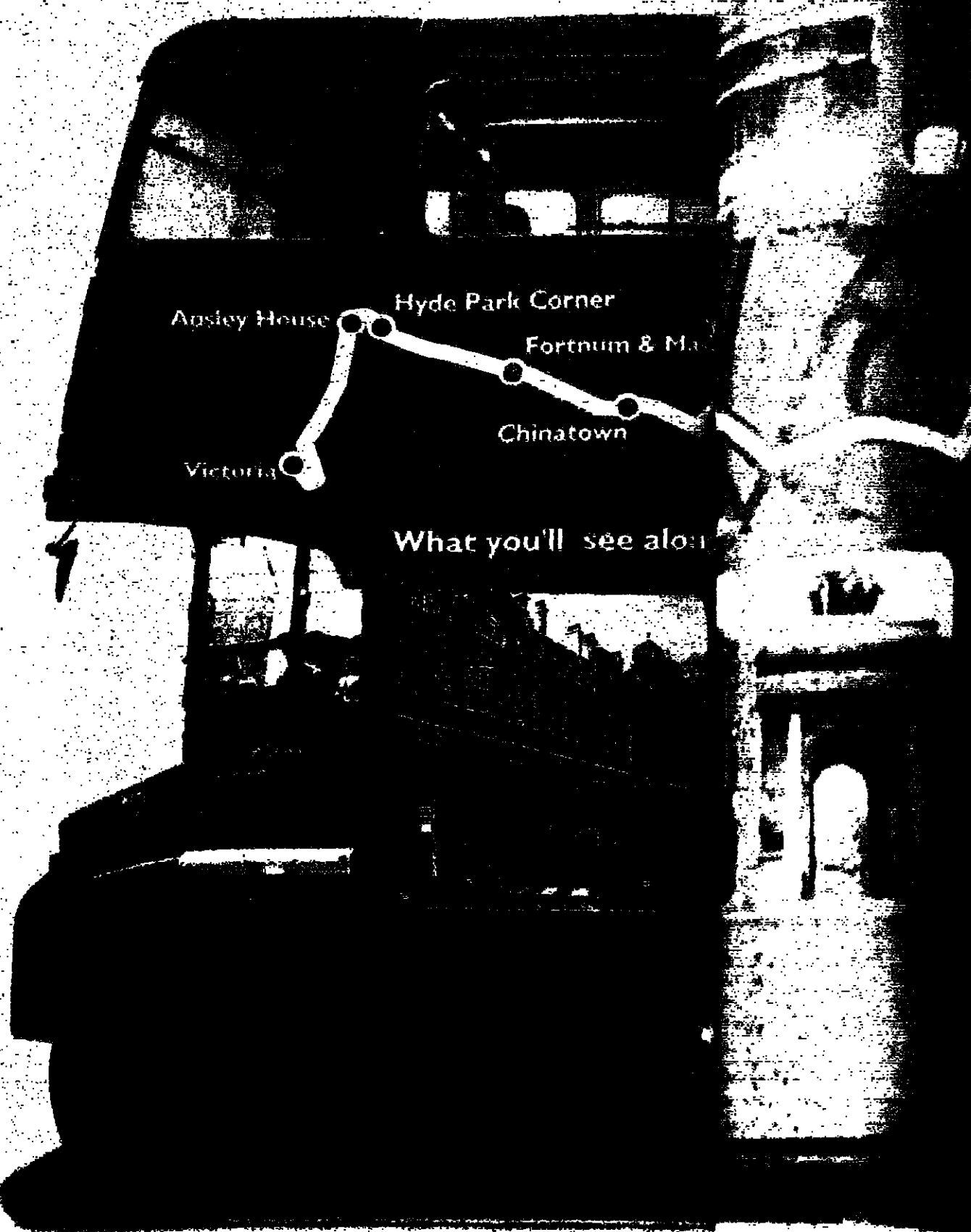
African Video Centre. Across on Dalston Lane, the Hackney Peace Carnival Mural depicts the devil in the midst of a multicultural celebration.

With luck the bus will cover the next mile along Graham Road with dispatch, so you need not dwell on crumbling grandeur. The closest the 38 gets to a hairpin bend is a sharp turn that catapults you on to the Hackney one-way system and pauses outside an heroic survivor. E. Gibbons established his Department Store in 1831 when Hackney was probably Europe's richest borough; now it is Britain's poorest. Not much has changed for Gibbons's store in terms of decor or, indeed, stock: the only concession to the 20th century is the acceptance of Visa cards.

In no sense is it all downhill from here. The best flourish that the route can offer is around the corner. The bus climbs diagonally across the glorious Clapton Square. South, St John at Hackney has maintained its austere grace through economic decline; north, the residential sense of order is disrupted by some modern atrocities but rescued by fading, ruddy leaves, budding crocuses and a scattering of snow that makes it as pretty an ensemble as any New England picture postcard. Off to one side, the towering police station looks like the work of an East End Frank Lloyd Wright, rising from street level with bold triangles and strident curves. Then, in quick succession, the spruce facade of Hackney Public Baths and the art deco Strand Building.

One more triumph lies on the final straight: the United Reformed Church, a temple that diminishes everything else on the Lower Clapton Road. The fine stonework is presently swathed in English Heritage scaffolding, but it will soon reopen as the jewel in Clapton's tarnished crown.

Ball's Pond has long evaporated, but the 38 terminus at Clapton Pond supports a small population of malarms. "Welcome to Hackney's Parks" costs a notice, but all the gates are locked. Arriving at this unhappy suburb is distinctly second best to the journey itself. From here, your options are limited: you could make your getaway on a bike from the Chain Gang bike shop, or in a Skoda from Newton Motors. Best, though, to take an instant re-run on the bus back to Victoria.



something to declare

Bargain of the week

The first-ever charter flights between the UK and Costa Rica begin on Tuesday. Return tickets costing £515 (prices go up in February) are available from Voyages Jules Verne (0171-723 5066). Having found your way to San José, the capital, go on a magical tour of Central America's most stunning scenery – you need invest only \$50 (£30). This buys a return bus trip to Panama City along the Pan-American Highway. You must book locally, through Panaline's office at the Continental Hotel in San José.

Trouble spots

This week's advice from our man in the Foreign Office

Poland: There have been a number of bombings in Warsaw, carried out by rival gangs, but foreigners have not been targeted. There is a serious risk of robbery at stations and on trains.

Western Sahara: We advise against travel in the territory. Travel is restricted. Overland travellers may well be turned back at Dakhla.

Kenya: Muggings and armed attacks can occur anywhere and at any time, particularly in Nairobi and Mombasa. Armed car-jackings are prevalent in the Nairobi area and on the Nairobi-Magadi road. Do not attempt to escape from hijackers or resist their demands.

France: Exercise sensible precautions, particularly in official and public places such as airports, railways and metro stations. British business premises and shops.

Foreign Office travel advice is available on 0171-270 4129; on BBC2 Ceefax page 564 onwards; and on the Internet at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>

Visitors' book

Pencylawdd Court, near Abergavenny

A lot of green, sheep, rain and kindness
– Antonella

??
– Bruce, San Francisco

!!
– Ruth, San Francisco

Like staying in a time capsule
– Trevor and Hazel, Evesham

Black pudding was my favourite
– Sophie, Fulham

You may have wondered why we were acting a little strange on the Sunday: I proposed to Nicky after dinner
– Guy, Twickenham

The best place ever to spend our wedding night
– Liz and Alec

A likely story

'It is as easy to get married in Las Vegas as it is to get a TV licence'
– 'Essentially America' magazine, winter 1995

If marriage, like life, is a lottery, where better to place your bets than in the gambling capital of the world? All you need, according to this lifestyle and travel magazine, is a spouse, a passport, \$35 (£21) in cash and to be free to marry. About 100,000 marriage licences are issued each year in Las Vegas, compared with 21.5 million TV licences in Britain. I have just bought one of the latter, and found the experience largely unstressful.

While the Las Vegas courthouse keeps longer hours than any British post office (8am to midnight, and around the clock at weekends), it merely takes care of the legal formalities. You have to make your way to one of the dozens of wedding chapels that line the Strip for the actual ceremony. You must choose from places of worship like the Little Church of the West and the Graceland Wedding Chapel, both of which looked to me like the worst sort of prefabricated New Town churches – with even poorer ambience. So perhaps your betrothed would prefer an inflight ceremony in a helicopter hovering above Glitter Gulch, or the eminently practical drive-thru wedding.

Even if you take this high-speed option, the whole nuptial procedure could make a dent of an hour in your valuable gambling time. Even with Christmas-length queues at the post office, you would be unlikely indeed to spend this long queuing for a TV licence. And the \$35 is just for legal fees; the wedding chapel will give you a price list for the actual ceremony, and discreetly suggest how much to tip the minister.

At £86.50 (shortly to increase to £90) a colour television licence is a big investment. However, if you change your mind you could always sell the TV you get a refund on the unused portion of the licence. Don't try this with a marriage licence, even one issued in Las Vegas.

Simon Calder

What is the silliest name that an up with to disguise the fact that flying economy? Answers on a board



SIMON CALDER

Please accept my resignation.

I don't want to belong to any club that would accept me as a member. With these words Groucho Marx is said to have withdrawn from the Friars Club. He would have approved of the British Airways Executive Club, which is preparing to expel or downgrade thousands of members. Mrs U Forinton of County Cork is one of them. Until now, if you could demonstrate you flew frequently enough on BA, then the company gave a gold or silver card entitling you to use the lounges at many airports. Now the policy is to look at how much you pay for your tickets before deciding whether or not to re-issue a card. So Mrs Forinton is being frozen out because the airline "is committed to rewarding its loyal, full-fare paying passengers" – in other words, those in the cheap seats are to be barred from BA lounges.

Airlines try to ease us gently into those cheap seats by describing them as anything other than "economy". World Traveller is promising, while Elizabethan Class sounds positively opulent, but these are the names, new and old, used by British Airways for the cramped bit at the back of planes. When Richard Branson started Virgin Atlantic, he wanted to name his two grades of service "Upper Class" and "Riff-Raff". The first stuck, the second was over-ruled by marketing people who have held sway ever since. So what is the silliest

name that an airline has come up with to disguise the fact that you are really flying economy. Answers on a boarding pass.

We do not try to pretend that the world is a perfect place, and carry regular warnings from our man in the Foreign Office (see opposite) about threats to travellers. But having just returned from Sri Lanka, Jane Westlake of London takes issue with the warnings and the Watchdog programme about the island. She has just returned from trip around the Indian subcontinent, ending in Sri Lanka. "Security is indeed high in Colombo [the capital], and you will be searched each time you go into a public building or shop. Anyone who lived in London during the IRA campaign will have a sense of déjà vu. The best thing is to spend as little time as possible in Colombo and enjoy the ancient cities, its hill country and beautiful beaches. As Marco Polo said it's undoubtedly the finest island of its size in the world."

The power of guide books to distort a destination is evident in many parts of the world, but it sounds as if Die Tien Hoang Street in the Vietnamese city of Hue takes the biscuit (or the prawn cracker).

According to Planet Earth newsletter of Lonely Planet Publications, it is lined with cafés whose owners all claim to have no power of speech. The book *Vietnam: a Travel Survival Kit* recommends the La Tahn restaurant at number 6, and mentions that the owner is mute. So to cash in on the backpacker trade, other cafés have sprung up alongside, all pretending to have silent proprietors. The sight, as you walk along to select a meal, is said to be hysterical.

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صكتا من الامل



Photo: Ann Smith

Six weeks at sea on a diet of bortsch

By David Follows

The *Komsomolsk* was late. Nobody, even the agents, knew when it would arrive. So we waited in Fremantle getting increasingly twitchy since our three-month Australian visas expired at the end of April.

Fortunately, the *Komsomolsk's* black hull loomed into harbour on 30 April, and we scrambled aboard. It was a 34,000 ton cargo ship, property of the Baltic Shipping Company of Russia; a ro-ro built, ominously, in a Baltic shipyard. Its cargo was loaded and unloaded over a huge ramp at the stern that descended at an angle on to the dockside in port, but which stuck up like a motorway to heaven while at sea. Since the *Komsomolsk* had proved uneconomical, the owners had recently decided to take passengers in addition to cargo. Our trip to Felixstowe would take a month, with calls en route at Jeddah and Genoa.

We had already sailed with several cargo ships serving different parts of the world, and enjoyed the voyages. Usually only a handful of passengers can be accommodated, there are no "entertainments", and a very relaxing voyage is guaranteed providing you hit it off reasonably well with the other passengers. In this case they were Australian and numbered five and a half, the half being a farmer who was shepherding 166 containers of Tasmanian onions to Europe, so he was half crew, half passenger.

We had been warned before embarking on the *Komsomolsk* that these Russian ships were pretty basic. There was, however, a reasonably sized swimming pool (for crew as much as passengers); the newly equipped cabins were adequate, and thanks to the ingenuity of Nicolai, the chief cook, the meals were interesting, though even he couldn't make hard bread and cold beetroot soup appetising.

The main drawback was our failure to communicate with the crew. Most of the officers could speak English but seldom bothered. The dark, sinister doctor couldn't, which was tough if you

How to hitch a ride on a cargo ship

A voyage on a passenger-carrying cargo ship is a perfectly feasible, if potentially expensive, way to see the world. The Strand Cruise and Travel Centre (0171-836 6363), based in the underground shopping concourse at Charing Cross station in London, specialises in this mode of transport. P&O Containers has a regular service costing £1,900 one-way to any Australian port, or £2,200 to New Zealand; these prices are per person including full board. NSB of Germany and ABC of Belgium have round-the-world itineraries, taking in both the Suez and Panama canals.

What to read

'Travel by Cargo Ship' by Hugo Verlinde (Cadogan, £9.95). For suggestions on how to work a passage on commercial shipping, you might also want to consult the 1995 edition of 'Work Your Way Around the World' (Vacation Work, £9.95).

went down with something peculiar. Nicolai, the First Mate - known as Nickers to differentiate him from the chief cook - had a hearty, laughing approach to the language which usually descended into gobbledegook when he was fielding awkward questions. Information, like most things in Russia, was in short supply.

The Indian Ocean and the Red Sea gave us some superb nature shows. Dolphins - or were they porpoises? - could often be seen nearby, arching their backs in graceful curving leaps. Hunting, or just showing off? Or you could walk the deck round the stacked containers to the distant sharp end of the ship and there watch the amazing flying fish take off to avoid our silent prow, eventually subsiding into the sea sometimes 30 or more metres away. As daylight faded, the horizon would cloak

itself in layers of gold, red and purple.

Arriving at Jeddah, passengers were not allowed off the ship and we were not allowed to take photographs. Before reaching port, all alcoholic drinks had been confiscated and secreted away into bond (the ship was "dry" so passengers had to bring their own refreshments with them). We thought the ship and its contents belonged to Russia, regardless of location, but the Captain was taking no chances with Saudi laws.

Egypt, fortunately, was more secular, but our arrival off Suez brought a different problem: money. Specifically the Suez Canal toll of \$205,000 which

amount was, er, not to hand immediately. One day's delay became two, three, eventually five. We thought of a whim-round, but seven and a half passengers couldn't make much of a dent in the sum needed. So we indulged instead in a trip to Cairo and the pyramids while the *Komsomolsk* waited. This turned out to be not a good idea. The drive across the awful desert, with only a few sad Army camps breaking the monotony, was made in two hired mini-buses. The drivers - in the red corner, Stirling Moss, in the blue, Nigel Mansell - competed furiously all the way, and got us to Cairo in record time and in a record state of hysteria.

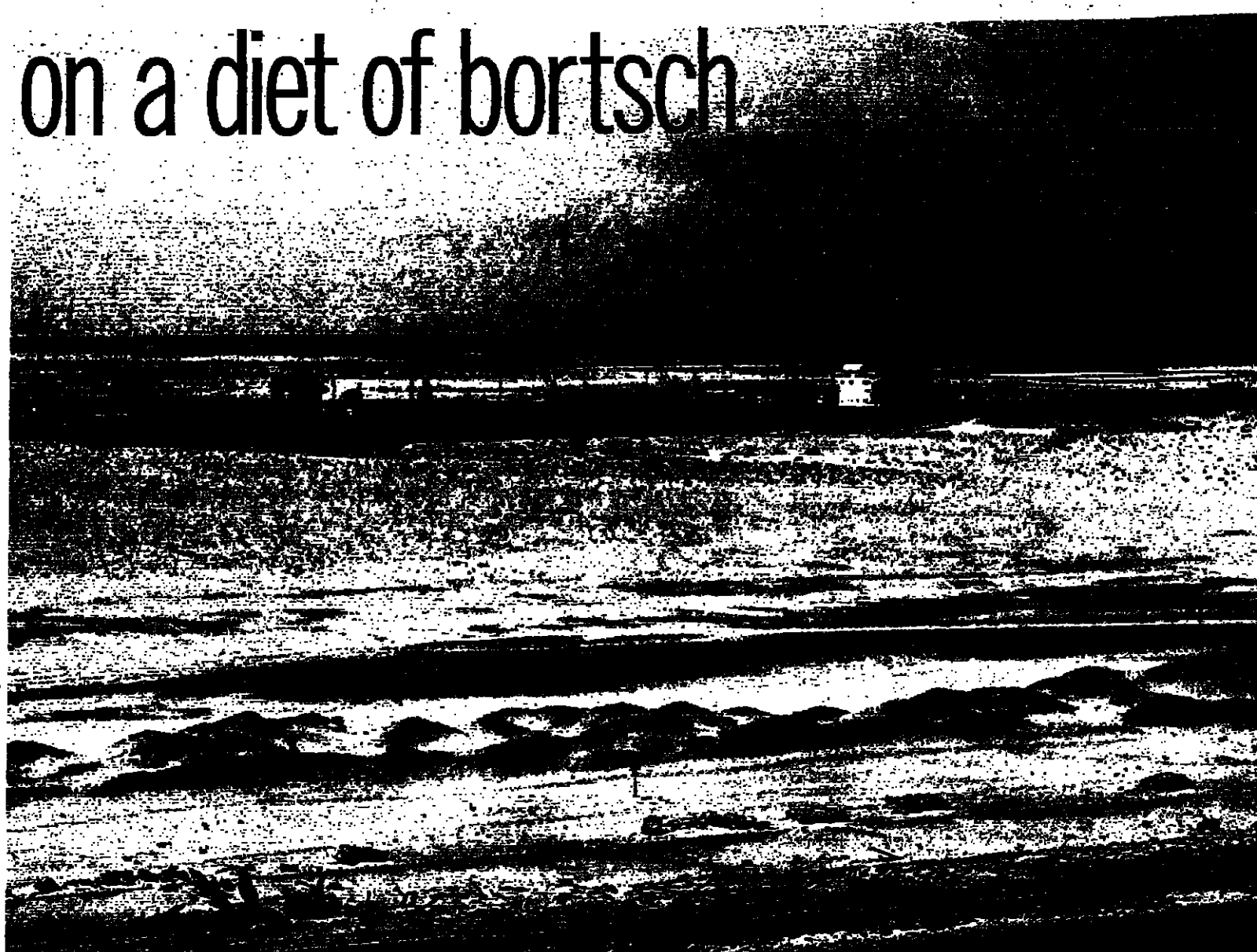
The Canal was eventually negotiated, and friendly Europe hove in sight. All problems solved? Not a bit of it. We were arrested in Genoa. The ship, that is, not us personally. The reason for the arrest, it seems, was that a sister ship, carrying paper from Brazil to Italy some three years before, had discharged its cargo in a dirty and damaged state, and had been fined by the Italians as a result. The fine had not been paid.

"But *Komsomolsk* is registered in Limassol, in Cyprus. They cannot legally arrest us," Nickers said. "We are not Russians at all."

"You could have fooled us, Nicolai,"

we said, glancing up at the blue, white and red flag and the Cyrillic spelling of the ship's name.

We finally escaped on this technicality. A smartly dressed gent came aboard with a brief case, disappeared into the Captain's cabin, and shortly reappeared and sailed away. Tension for half an hour. Had we been released? Suddenly the engines throbbed into life. Nickers did a little dance on the bridge and gave us the thumbs up sign. So we sailed off. Throughout the entire journey (by now extended to six weeks) we had seen no rain. Guess what met us in Felixstowe...



At a standstill just before the Suez Canal, where a toll is extracted from ships passing through

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Purple haze on the horizon

Jimi Hendrix was inspired there. Orson Welles filmed there. So how come Essaouira has stayed off the beaten track? By Rick Williams

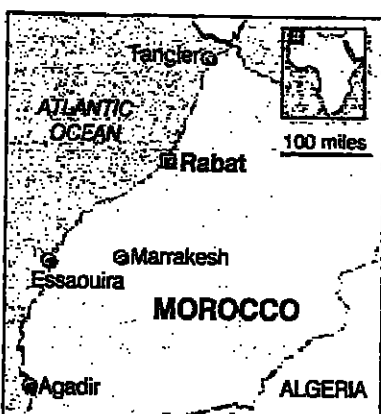
The sun dropped below the horizon, sky and sea bathed in a haze of reds and purples. The wind died and the waves fell silent, the ebbing Atlantic exposing the collapsed Bordj El Berod fortress. I sat on a rock before its jagged silhouette, and tried to remember the words to the song.

It was the same drunken ruins and, for all I know, the same rock, which inspired Jimi Hendrix 30 years ago to write the soulful "Castles Made of Sand". That and Morocco's finest cash crop. The guitarist's visit to Essaouira is now the stuff of legend.

I was about to go when a toothless, middle-aged man appeared. Meloud was a musician and local historian. Yes, he remembered Hendrix coming. No, he only stayed 10 days. Too busy with concerts and recordings. But Essaouira has changed little since then, he added. "They wanted to make a big glass hotel," he said, "but the people stopped it." It now stands crumbling like the ruins, a reminder to property developers that Essaouira is saying "no" to package tourism.

Getting in that morning, I was surprised by the absence of hustlers. Morocco has a large entry in any traveller's encyclopaedia of rip-off anecdotes, the locals' zest for dealing and haggling coming as a Force 10 culture shock. But as I searched for a hotel in Essaouira's maze of narrow streets, the only reaction I got was a polite smile and I almost felt neglected. Low doorways led into gloomy interiors, and a heady perfume of fish, seaweed and resinous smoke clung to the blue and white houses. Seagulls squawked and soared in the sky above while children played hopscotch with ocean-polished pebbles.

My hotel room overlooked the ramparts, where an 18th-century cannon pointed out to a returning fleet of fishing trawlers. It was with a moody, pan-



ning shot of these Gothic walls that Orson Welles opened his 1952 version of *Othello*.

Hendrix and Welles, for a provincial town miles from anywhere, Essaouira has impressive celebrity connections. But it's the truly laid-back atmosphere that has made it a must for the independent traveller. And the surf.

Stretching south in a glorious three-mile curve of golden sand, the beach was irresistible, the town end a *mélée* of football matches and gymnastics. Dodging tackles and uninhibited displays of press-ups and squat thrusts, I made my way down to the shore. A young boy sold me a fresh piece of coconut and a nomad in a blue turban offered me a ride on his camel. I declined, the animal baring its teeth and snorting with glee. It was a circus which ended half a mile on, sun blazing down on a scattering of sunbathers as I strolled through the waves.

The ruins of the Bordj El Berod mark the end of the bay, but the beach continues for another 15 miles to Sidi Kaouki, a Mecca for surfers and a 20-minute bus ride. Behind the ruins is the Berber village of Diabat where Hendrix stayed. Despite an offi-

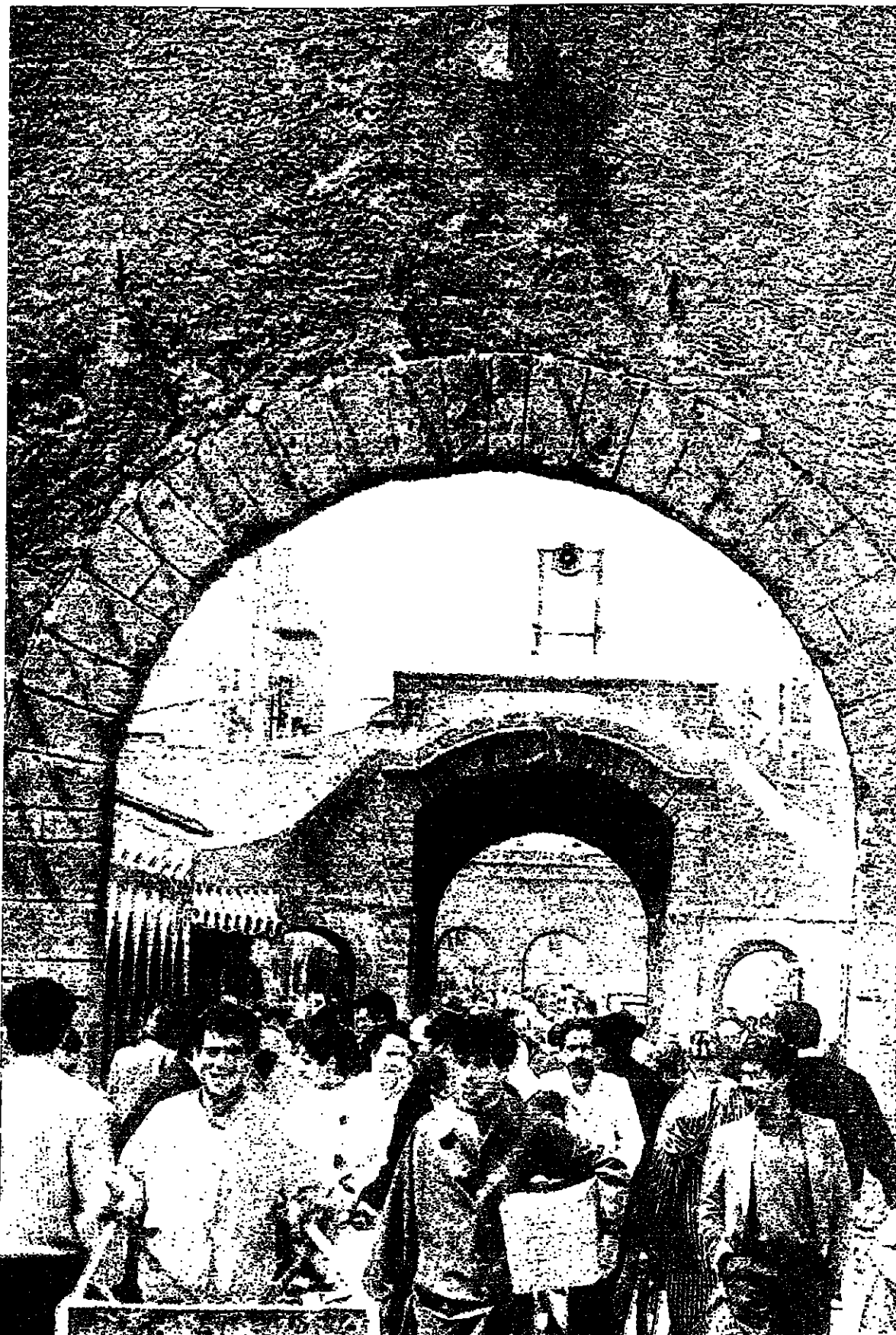
cial clampdown, it's still possible to rent houses there.

A mile out in the bay is the Ile de Mogador. Once a prison for political exiles, it is now a nature reserve and the only non-Mediterranean breeding ground for the majestic Eleonora's falcon. It is possible to visit by boat but the best place to observe the birds is on the beach at sunset when they glide over the sea in search of insects. I witnessed one in breathtaking aerial combat. Launching itself off the sea, it bore down on a smaller bird who ducked and dived. It looked like the game was up when the falcon suddenly tired, the smaller bird escaped and I and several others applauded a memorable dogfight.

The Place Prince Moulay Hassan was the place to hang out in the evening, drinking mint tea and watching the crowds. The flow of people was endless, women in traditional djellabas and their hands hennaed, mixing with younger girls in Western dress. Men stood chatting in groups and the shoeshine boys tried to convince me that they could do wonders for my canvas shoes. I ate fish tajine and went shopping.

Thuya is an indigenous conifer whose hardwood and root possesses an exquisite grain. It has created a woodcarving and marquetry tradition in Essaouira whose craftsmanship is second to none. From tiny workshops built into the sea walls, artisans painstakingly create boxes, bowls, furniture and chessboards. There is little need to haggle. Prices start embarrassingly low and I staggered back to my hotel laden with gifts.

A week later, I flew back from Agadir, a Costa clone resort three hours down the coast. At the airport, the newspapers were full of articles about the 25th anniversary of Hendrix's death. The song finally came back to me. "And castles made of sand slip in the sea eventually." But Essaouira continues to defy the seas of change.



Essaouira's bustling main thoroughfare, Rue Mohammed Zerkouni

Photograph: Robert Harding

British dukes have been replaced by sun worshippers and 'Sun' readers

Tangier is living in the shadow of its colonial past. By Hugh O'Shaughnessy

African life hits you full in the face as you disembark in Tangier. Forget the Marks & Spencer, Mothercare and red pillar boxes of Main Street, Gibraltar, on the other side of the Straits. Put aside memories of the once-poor, now-prosperous Andalusians in Algiers. This, with a vengeance, is Moslem Africa - poor, noisy, chaotic, infinitely exotic and stupendously interesting to the European eye. Tangier may have become Portuguese in 1471 and been part of Catherine of Braganza's dowry when she married Charles II in 1661, and the British flag may have flown over the city for a few years, but that was a long time ago. Tangier has been firmly absorbed into the kingdom of Morocco.

Check your money carefully at the bureau de change. Haggle with the taxi driver before you allow him to take you to your hotel. Stare at the men, some wearing crimson fezzes and hooded *jellabas*, drinking mint tea in the pavement cafés. The women don't sit in cafés. Some veiled, some in brown wimples which make them look like Carmelite nuns, they glide about town doing more than their fair share of manual work. There are two cities in Tangier. The one where people have been



The medieval Medina, left, with its tiny streets and houses. Colonial Tangier, right, an international enclave from 1923-1956. Photographs: Robert Harding

contains a massive French consulate-general like a Roman villa where they fly the tricolour as if to recall the 19th century when the French exercised their "protectorate" over Morocco.

Ghosts survive of a past when the city was a hotbed of intrigue among European diplomats plotting to seize parts of Africa, spies watching the Straits and gays finding refuge from legal and social outlaws in Europe. Between 1923 and 1956, Tangier was an international enclave ruled by a committee of consuls from 30 countries, an international no-man's land where anything went. No wonder William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac and Alan Ginsberg warmed to the place, putting up at the Hotel Al-Muniria in Rue Magellan.

Little mementoes of Britain linger on. Beside the ancient gramophone at the reception desk of the Continental Hotel, arms of Prince Alfred Ernest Albert, Queen Victoria's fourth child who became Duke of Edinburgh and later Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha,



are framed. Once the most fashionable place in town, the Continental is friendly and run-down, where British dukes have been succeeded by jolly, tattooed British sun worshippers and Sun readers. A few yards from the hotel, in an ancient battery overlooking the sea, the inscription on a gigantic 19th-century gun tells you it was made by Sir W.C. Armstrong and Company in Newcastle.

The best hotel is El Minzah, erected in the centre of town by the

Marquis of Bute in the Thirties. Its courtyard, with a cool fountain and waiters in fezzes and baggy trousers, is covered with rose petals. It is the perfect place for breakfast.

Here you can conspire with some of the cultured expatriates who have stayed on, and settle your onward travel plans: deeper into Africa from this cosmopolitan pinnacle of a city, or reluctantly to make your way back between the Pillars of Hercules to Gibraltar: from Morocco to the mundane.

How to get to Tangier

Royal Air Maroc flies twice weekly between Heathrow and Tangier; GB Airways flies once a week on behalf of British Airways (0345 222111). Fares of £175 including tax through discount agents.

Where to stay there

The El Minzah hotel (00 212 9 93 5825) is at 85 rue de la Liberté, and charges £110 per night for two, excluding breakfast. Plenty of less expensive places are available.

How to get to Essaouira

Take the express train from Tangier to Marrakech, a journey of 9-10 hours. Frequent buses cover the remaining 100 miles to Essaouira in three hours. The total cost is around £15.

Who to ask

Moroccan Tourist Board, 205 Regent Street, London W1R 7DE (0171-437 0073).

What to read

Morocco, a Travel Survival Kit (Lonely Planet, £9.95).

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Timid travellers may be put off by some of the small print in the new Explore Worldwide brochure: "Before you agree to undertake a holiday in a wild or remote area, you should clearly understand that besides discomfort it may involve you in personal risk." If you are undeterred, then Explore (01252 319448) can offer trips to Albania (15 days, £920), Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (12 days, £1,190) and Borneo (16 days, £1,295). Those of an untidy disposition are warned that "Some countries refuse

admission to travellers not meeting their accepted standards of dress/appearance."

The Imaginative Traveller (0181-742 8612) warns: "Think twice before booking with us" in its new Middle East brochure, which includes a trip visiting Gallipoli around the time of Anzac Day (eight days, £265, excluding flights to Istanbul).

Should you want to spend Christmas in South Africa, or join England's cricketers there, seats are still available. Bridge The

World (0171-911 0900) has flights to Johannesburg each Monday via Dar es Salaam; you fly to the Tanzanian capital on Alliance, then transfer to South African Airways. A return tickets costs £263, including tax.

Travellers using the new series of charter flights to Las Vegas will need all the financial help they can get once they arrive. So the Quality Inn (377 East Flamingo Road, 00 1 702 733 7777) is offering a special "European visitor rate" of \$29 per room per night.

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In the company of wolves

Slovakia's High Tatras mountains offer skiing resorts where Lycra is unheard of and breakfasts are big. By Michael Mewshaw

The High Tatras in Slovakia are about a seven-hour train trip from Prague. My journey, though, felt much longer. I reached the city of Poprad late at night and caught a cog-rail car that climbed through darkness so impenetrable it might have been a tunnel. Eight miles north, at Starý Smokovec, I got off at a station with cheerfully lighted lamps and loudspeakers playing a sprightly tune entitled *Summer in Dnie*, just what you want to hear when the temperature is 14 degrees below zero. The information booth was shuttered, the ticket windows closed and the waiting room deserted. Outside, there were no taxis and not a pedestrian in sight.

At the top of an icy hill directly above me, the Grand Hotel, a half-timbered monstrosity, hovered in the night. At that hour, and in my mood, it resembled the Addams Family residence. But once inside the lobby my outlook improved. A pre-Communist relic, the hotel wasn't nearly as forbidding as its initial appearance suggested. Children cavorted on brocade couches while grown-ups shot pool or sat in a reading alcove amply stocked with books. The guests all appeared to be real people, not a collection of manicured stavelings such as you normally see at ski resorts. In such places everybody is decked out in Lycra. In the High Tatras, the preferred costume of the après-ski crowd is a sweatshirt, baggy tracksuit bottoms and imitation Nikes. Best of all, a double room costs about £35 a night – about what you'd pay for breakfast at a luxury hotel in Switzerland.

And speaking of breakfast, the Slovaks are hearty souls who like to stoke up for a day on the slopes. The buffet at the Grand Hotel was a cardiologist's nightmare, complete with bacon, four kinds of sausage, hard-boiled or scrambled eggs and a half-dozen different cheeses. Whatever this did to my arteries, it fortified me for a hike through the village of Starý Smokovec – an unspoiled place with harmonious, low-rise architecture, not the kind of towering condos that have transmogrified many Alpine hamlets. Some 300 square miles of the Tatras have been either preserved as a national park or protected, with restrictions on new construction.

Certain areas of the mountains are entirely off-limits and remain untouched habitats for some of Europe's last populations of bear, wolves and lynxes. Still, despite the emphasis on environmental protection, the Tatras have world-class ski runs, ice-skating rinks, sled runs, cross-country trails, ski jumps and hockey



How to get there

There are no direct flights from the UK to Slovakia. To reach Prague, tickets are available on British Midland's new service from Heathrow for £161 return including tax through discount agents such as Major Travel (0171-485 7017). As an alternative to the long train journey, there are connecting flights on the Czech airline CSA from Prague to Košice in Slovakia.

Where to stay

Starý Smokovec's Grand Hotel, Wolcova 2, is opposite the railway station (00 42 969 2501); alternatives in Poprad are the Club Hotel (00 42 92 23725) and the Europa (00 42 92 32744).

Prices are risibly low. A lift ticket costs about £6 a day, and ski and boot rentals run from around £4 to £8.

I had thrown my back out and was unable to ski so I could indulge in my real passion: walking. The High Tatras have miles of trails that are kept clear of snow, and an electric train connects Starý Smokovec to nearby towns. I bought a ticket and settled into a seat in a rear car. As the little train trundled past snowy forests of fir and pine, and copes of birch and aspen whose bark peeled off like curling paper, I saw myself as a character in *Doctor Zhivago*, fleeing urban chaos, searching for a quiet spot in which to recollect lost loves.

A short trip brought me to Strbské Pleso, the highest habitation in the Tatras. At an altitude



Certain areas of the High Tatras remain habitats for wildlife, elsewhere there are world-class ski runs

Photograph: Skishoot/Offshoot

of 4,445 feet, the village is strewn across snowy mountains and backed against a granite wall 2,000 feet higher. Yet the sound of Bob Marley and the Wailers singing "I shot the sheriff" insinuated itself into every stone cranny of the neighbourhood. In Slovakia, one has the sense, even in isolated areas, of being imprisoned in a video of somebody else's devising.

Strbské Pleso offers excellent ski runs and also serves as a staging area for climbing, cross-country skiing along the Cesta Slobody (Path of Freedom), or, in my case, for strolling around the second largest tarn on the Slovak side of the Tatras. Although I shared the well-defined footpath with several other hikers, I had a splendid sense of discovery and solitary enjoyment. Beyond the reach of municipal

loudspeakers, the woods along the shore of the frozen lake were so quiet I could hear the crunch of my feet in the snow. Sunlight streamed through the trees, glittering on ice-encrusted branches and paving the path in colours like the aisle of a cathedral.

Lest the High Tatras sound like a paradise, however, I should add that they are unlikely to suit travellers who insist on haute cuisine. "Don't eat anything," one half-hysterical German woman warned me as I entered a restaurant in Tatranská Lomnica. "It's all sickening."

I took most of my meals at the Grand Hotel, and although the food tended to be bland, it was satisfactory. The lack of culinary sophistication was compensated for by the sweet patience of the waiters and by the melodramatic

performance of the *maître d'hôtel*. Whenever anybody ordered a flambé dish, he dimmed the lights and prepared it with great ceremony, managing never to singe a single guest.

One night after dinner, he sauntered back to my table carrying two immense crystal goblets. Lightly clinking them together, he set the crystal ringing and held it close to my ear as he asked if I'd care for a liqueur. While waiting for an answer, he placed the goblets on a serving table and spun them like tops. They wobbled dangerously, but he wasn't worried. He had perfected this act over decades and was pleased to hear his guests gasp while he stood serenely smiling, certain the crystal wouldn't crash to the floor, and convinced his audience would express its appreciation in applause and hard currency.

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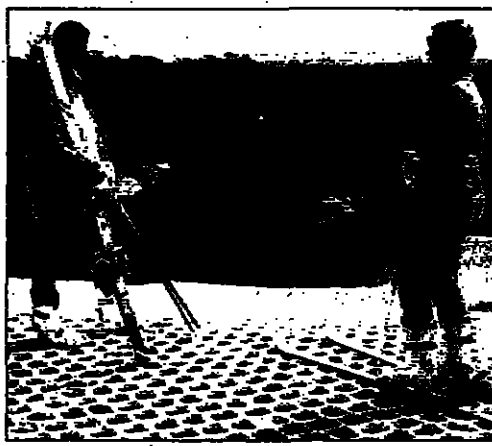
Snow's up

By Chris Gill

So, it's mid-December and your skiing holiday is only weeks away – maybe only days. By now, you must be well into the routine of twice-weekly exercise classes. And doubtless you are making the most of all those incidental opportunities to improve your flexibility, power and stamina – you know, standing in bus queues tightening your quads, that sort of thing.

What? You're making no effort to graduate from your usual flabby state to one of supreme fitness? Well, join the club. I have just conducted a highly scientific survey of half a dozen ski journalists, gathered in St Anton to celebrate the effective start of the season, and can report that of the six only one claimed to be fully prepared – and he reported that with a suspicious smirk on his face.

Practically all said that they thought pre-ski exercises were desirable, and one came up with an ingenious rationale: people like us, who ski regularly



throughout the season, can effectively get fit for skiing simply by skiing, taking it easy to begin with; skiers who go for only a week or two, on the other hand, naturally want to go hell for leather right from the start, so need to be prepared. Convinced?

The proper thing to do, of course, is join a structured class; if you're lucky, your local sports centre will be able to accommodate you. If that's all too much trouble, consider getting an exercise tape or video. At least do what I've been doing for the last couple of weeks: taking every opportunity to work my thigh muscles, in the

vague hope that this will help save me from knee injuries. Skiing on a dry slope is not really an alternative to exercises – you'd need to do an awful lot of skiing. But it has great value for absolute beginners, who can step on to the nursery slopes later in the winter confident in their ability to climb, stop, turn and get up after a fall. From tomorrow, skiers based west of London have an impressive new dry slope at their disposal: Wycombe Summit is one of the biggest dry slopes in Britain (350m long), a mile from Junction 4 on the M40. Call 01494 474711 for details.

Snow conditions

Dry-slope matting might have been very useful this weekend in the high French Alps, where the *Première Neige* races are being held on a course consisting largely of man-made snow, but a lack of snow on the adjacent slopes means that spectators will be confined to the finish area at valley level (unless there has been a last-minute dump, which would probably ruin the race course). Here in St Anton, in contrast, the season is off to a flying start, with about a metre of snow and powdery pistes at altitude, and good cover (partly thanks to snowmaking, it must be admitted) right down into the town. The streets are snow-covered, the sun is out, the sky is blue, the temperature is low, and the mountain beckons.

EUROPEAN DEPARTURES

Dias dorados translates literally as "golden days", but in practice means "between now and June, Spain's paradises are really quite empty, so we've cut the prices to older visitors try to fill them up".

The paradox scheme began as a government initiative to convert historic buildings into upmarket hotels. There are now more than 70 such properties in towns and cities all over mainland Spain, and in the Canary Islands and the North African territory of Ceuta. Until 30 June, over 60s get a discount of 35 per cent on stays of one or two nights.

For three nights or more, you can save 50 per cent on normal rates. Some properties have restrictions on weekend/weekday availability, or over the Christmas and Easter periods, but many – such as the new paradox in the Andalusian town of Ronda – are offering reduced rates throughout. These start at around £20 per person per night. B&B. Paradoxes are represented in the UK by Keytel International (0171-402 2182).

It's a tough job, but some louside broadcast engineer will be obliged to take a

cruise on the maiden voyage of *Minerva* next spring to record *Gardeners' Question Time*. The new Swan Helenic vessel is making a botanical cruise of Italy, Greece and Turkey, and an edition of the *Radio 4* programme is to be recorded on board. The cruise begins in Genoa on 29 April, and prices start at £2,810; call 0171-800 2200.

Who needs the Net? Sunflower Books, which publishes "Landscapes" walking and touring guides to Mediterranean destinations, has a service which may appeal to people who prefer

not to travel the Internet. The publisher will provide a free update to readers who order books through Sunflower's mail order service (0171-589 1862).

Yet another operator begins sailing between Dover and Calais on New Year's Day. SeaFrance (01304 204204) promises "Unique French ambience, comfort, imaginative style and decor". Regular travellers, however, may recognise the new company's ships as vessels that are currently plying the Channel as part of the Stena Sealink fleet, striking port workers permitting.

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The problem is not just the weather: in bad conditions we become a nation of insane motorists. This week proved no exception. By Penny Jackson

Drive too fast in freezing snow and you'll end up off the road.

sliding into a never-ending queue. "It took me five hours to go 20 miles. I have never seen anything like it. As soon as you touched the brake or accelerator, you slid sideways. I was driving an automatic, which didn't help, and all I could do was put the car into neutral and follow the shape of the ice. Despite the horrendous conditions, an occasional dope

Certainly, some people do seem to leap into their cars without thinking about snow piled up on top. On a school run, I spotted a man trying to clean a back-door window while driving. Another stopped suddenly, sending us behind into a skid, because the snow on his roof descended over his windscreen like an all-obscuring blanket.

Rivals

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VW Polo 1.6L, £11,344 Able, well packaged supermini. Although a class down from the 216, longer in wheelbase and roomier in the back. Fine ride and handling, indifferent performance. Lacks Rover's spirit.

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Age Group	Percentage of Respondents
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30-49	80%
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70+	70%

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money

Many people, it is clear, are still too innocent or too ignorant to be able to resist the blandishments of a well-trained and highly motivated insurance salesman

Full marks to the Consumers Association, which this week came out with some interesting and headline-grabbing research showing how often financial advisers give poor investment advice to those who come looking to them for help in their financial affairs. A survey in the monthly magazine *Which?* suggests that up to a third of all advisers give bad and unsuitable advice.

The most common offence identified is recommending a financial product that is quite inappropriate in investment terms, but which has the great merit (from the adviser's point of view) of earning a commission.

One of their researchers who was sent out to pose as a redundant man wondering what to do with his £15,000 pay-off was on several occasions urged to put his money into investment bonds or Peps when a risk-free building society or bank account would have better suited his needs.

A second researcher, claiming to be a young man looking to save some money to pay for his wedding two to three years away, was offered a variety of unsuitable alternatives, including a personal pension, Tessa savings accounts and even on one occasion, two emerging market investment trusts.

All of them would have earned commission for the adviser that the researcher went to see.

Accountants and solicitors were just as culpable of putting their own commercial interests ahead of those of their client, the survey found, as independent financial advisers.

In fact, concludes *Which?*, despite their often poor reputation, the independent financial advisers came out best of all the types of advisers they looked at.

Naturally, one hopes that the advisers who come badly out of this exercise are suitably chastised by the exposure.

Bad publicity can be a powerful deterrent. It is actually

quite easy to take issue with the conclusions of the survey. The findings are based on a very limited sample, and the Consumers Association is nothing if not the ultimate do-gooding body, with all the strengths and weaknesses which that implies.

The notion that it can dictate what financial advice anyone should be given is in the finest tradition of nannying – well-intentioned but bossy. The implicit assumption in the two cases it presented is that most people are, or should be, risk-averse at all times.



JONATHAN DAVIS
INVESTMENTS

Not for nothing, one suspects, was the second guinea-pig it chose to test a 26-year-old trainee accountant, though one hopes he would have known better.

Such aversion to risk is certainly not the kind of attitude which is going to make the British economy great again. In the movies, at least, any young man with real fire in his belly would not be saving for his wedding, but living life to the full and taking risks while he still could. He would, almost certainly, not be a trainee accountant in the first place.

One's mid-twenties, if only one knew it at the time, are actually a very good time to be investing in the stock market. You only need to find one or two successful companies, such as a Glaxo, Sainsbury's or Rentokil, to set yourself up for a prosperous later life, while the risks of doing something that permanently damages your wealth at that stage are still small.

But there is no point in being over-censorious about this kind of survey. Such

exercises are well-intentioned and have the potential to do an awful lot of good.

The consumer badly lacks a champion to stand up for him against the vested interests in the financial services industry. The banks, building societies and insurance companies, like all former cartels, need a powerful consumer lobby to keep them on their toes.

Nor can anyone doubt that the problem of commission-driven sales of financial products is a real one. The sorry saga of the mis-sold personal pensions is graphic evidence of that.

Many people, it is clear, are still too innocent or too ignorant to be able to resist the blandishments of a well-trained and highly motivated insurance salesman.

Unfortunately, those who say that the answer lies in more regulation are only partially right.

The only way to avoid inadequate financial advice for certain is for individuals to arm themselves with the necessary information to protect themselves against committing financial folly.

As I mentioned a few weeks ago, the solution really goes all the way back to the education system. In the last years of the twentieth century, it is still depressing that thousands leave their schools or universities without any clear sense of how to manage their own financial affairs.

Even supposedly well-educated people can be curiously myopic when it comes to money matters. While many rely on friends for advice, the trouble is that there is no guarantee that this produces any better results than listening to some unknown adviser. Relying on your bank manager for wholly disinterested financial advice is also not without risk.

All the banks these days are in the business of trying to sell extra financial services to their customers, which creates its own potential conflicts of interest.

In any case, as Professor Jim Gower, who wrote the reports which the Government used to frame the cur-

rent Financial Services Act, points out, the other problem with financial advice in this country is not that it is often bad.

It is that, as a nation, we are so reluctant to seek it. When we do, we prefer to try and get it on the cheap rather than pay a reasonable fee for it. One reason why independent financial advisers and others end up being so dependent on commission is that they cannot always make a decent living without it.

As is so many things, the only sure way to get good financial advice is to pay for it. Over a lifetime, the cost will more than be recouped by the savings and returns that it generates.

But best of all is to put the time and effort into finding the answers yourself. The Consumers Association itself publishes several useful books on mortgages, pensions and the like.

Riveting reads they are not, but a couple of hours ploughing through them is certainly a worthwhile investment – even for accountants.



Investment drive: LDV, the Leyland DAF van maker, is Dunedin Enterprise's largest holding

Unquoted companies can be a nightmare for investors. But in the hands of a cautious Scot, one trust is doing nicely

By Alison Eadie

Dunedin Enterprise, a £51m venture and development capital investment trust, has had a good run in the past 18 months. Its shares and net asset value have grown strongly, winning it awards this year from *Microcap* and *What Investment?*

It was not always so. Brian Finlayson, who manages the trust, says its performance after coming to the stock market in 1987 was poor. Investing in start-up and high-technology businesses had not worked.

In the early 1990s the focus of investment was switched to later-stage financing of management buyouts, buy-ins and development capital for growing private companies. That switch is now paying off.

Investments made two and three years ago are taking advantage of a buoyant stock market and a renewed corporate appetite for acquisitions, and are floating or being sold to bigger companies. The trust has benefited through rising asset values and a growing cash pile to put into new investments.

Buying and selling unquoted companies is a very different game to stock-picking in the quoted market. Information about companies and access to their shares is restricted. Accountants are often in the driving seat and invite venture capital fund managers to make competitive tenders, often on the basis of just one meeting, Mr Finlayson says.

Despite the somewhat haphazard system compared with the efficiencies of the quoted market – Mr Finlayson admits he never knows where the next deal will come from – deals do arrive and some prove to be out-and-out winners.

Dunedin Enterprise's largest holding is LDV, formerly Leyland DAF Vans, which was bought out from the receiver in February 1993. It made pre-tax profits of £19.4m last year and paid the trust a net dividend of £295,000.

Although income is welcome, capital

growth is the objective. That will come in full when LDV floats on the stock market, possibly next year. The impact on asset values could be considerable. At present the trust values its 6.5 per cent holding in a much more conservative fashion than 31, another big investor in LDV.

The concentrated nature of the trust's portfolio – the top 10 holdings accounted for 74 per cent of total value at the end of April – underlines the need for care when making investments. Mr Finlayson is a cautious Scot. "I have a philosophy that says we don't lose money."

Given that investing in small, private companies is much higher-risk than buying big company shares, such an aim is not necessarily easy to achieve. Mr Finlayson, who likes to see every company the trust backs, is quick to remind his team that they are investing his money.

He has £100,000 in Dunedin Enterprise, his second-largest investment after his house. He also monitors investments closely and sits on the boards of three of the trust's biggest holdings.

Most investments perform satisfactorily and a few perform spectacularly, he says. A few take a long time to come right. Of the 43 holdings, 10 are "still alive" but have no value attributed to them. They are just ticking over or making some money, but have no realisation prospects in sight. "Patience can be rewarded," Mr Finlayson says, but adds that it is more important to concentrate on the fast-growing companies of value.

"We invest in management and make money out of basic businesses," he says. The trust has a bias towards manufacturing and towards Scotland. Its bigger holdings include Motherwell Bridge, the Scottish engineering company, Coal Products, a smokeless fuel buy-out from British Coal, Macdonald Hotels, Scottish Highland Hotels, and Travel & General Holdings, which underwrites bonds for the travel industry.

Its method is to buy on a low price-earnings ratio and sell some three to five years later on a high price-earnings ratio, explains Mr Finlayson. In the past four years the trust has not paid more than 10 times the previous year's earnings for a company.

It values its bigger holdings at around 10 times historic profits and its smaller holdings at four to nine times historic profits. The FT All-share index is presently on a historic p/e of 16, giving plenty of scope for a huge uplift in value when investments come to market.

The trust then sells out, although not always immediately. When Donnich Hunter, the filter manufacturer, floated in March last year, Dunedin Enterprise topped up its holding as another investor wanted to unload. It is gradually selling into strength, having seen Hunter's shares rise from 200p on listing to 325p this week.

A spate of realisations means the trust is sitting on £13m cash, the most it has ever had. Mr Finlayson is unperturbed. "There is no point in rushing into deals and no point in going into quoted stocks. We'll stick to our knitting," he insists.

The "knitting" means only investing in businesses Mr Finlayson can understand. In the main these are cash-flow, high-margin businesses. There have been no high-tech investments for the past five years and start-ups are only countenanced if the management is well proven.

The average size of each investment is between £750,000 and £2.5m and the trust aims for an annualised return of 25 per cent to 35 per cent. Although this sounds desperately ambitious, with inflation running at 3.2 per cent, Mr Finlayson says the trust has been hitting its target in the last two to three years.

In the long run unquoted equity should outperform quoted to justify the extra risk. Dunedin Enterprise has comfortably outperformed the FT-SE A investment trust index over five years, yet as Mr Finlayson points out the shares of many venture capital investment trusts including Dunedin Enterprise languish well below their net asset values.

The lagged effect of asset values, which are updated twice a year and based on historic profits of investee companies, means there should be more good news to come even if the pace of asset growth is slowing.

Mr Finlayson certainly believes there is plenty of value in unquoted equity still to be unlocked.

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Mortgage arrears: a user's guide

Paying off a mortgage debt? Clifford German and James Hipwell give some practical advice



Halifax has been quick to reject claims that mortgage lenders overcharge borrowers by calculating amounts due without taking monthly repayments into account

Borrowers who fall into arrears on their mortgages but then find themselves in a position to resume payments may now have the right to insist their arrears are consolidated and rescheduled over the whole of the remaining length of the mortgage, following a ruling in the Court of Appeal this week.

The Court over-ruled an earlier county court judgement and decided that it was unreasonable to expect Mrs Christina Norgan to clear arrears of £20,000 on a £225,000 mortgage from Guardian Building Society, now part of Cheltenham & Gloucester, within four years, rather than over the remaining 13-year life of the original mortgage.

Lenders may well accept the judgement, although in different circumstances they might have been tempted to apply for earlier repossession orders while the borrowers were not in a position to claim they could resume servicing their loan.

The ruling is not likely to affect the majority of cases where borrowers fall behind on their payments because of long-term illness, unemployment or family circumstances, such as the departure of a breadwinner which leaves the remaining occupants with not enough income to service the loan as well as meet other commitments. In some cases

arrears begin to build up because the borrowers realise they are trapped in a property with negative equity, and lose heart in the fight to keep it.

In the vast majority of such cases lenders will now try and get borrowers round a table to discuss the situation. If the case is hopeless lenders will seek a repossession order which the borrowers will not oppose. If there is a chance that the situation can be redeemed most lenders will nowadays try to seek an arrangement. Lenders will probably still seek a repossession order but it will be suspended if there is a possibility of a negotiated settlement.

The case of Mrs Norgan and her farmhouse appears to have passed the point of a negotiated settlement some years ago. But attitudes to arrears already appear to have softened. When cases have gone to court most judges have decided that arrears would have to be cleared within a reasonable period, usually over three to five years.

However Cheltenham & Gloucester, which took over Guardian in 1990, says individual circumstances alter cases, but if borrowers can resume payments on the original mortgage and make a small reduction in the arrears over a period of perhaps six months, they do now consider consolidating the remaining arrears into

the debt and rearranging payments over the life of the mortgage, provided that the borrowers' circumstances allow them to service the new loan without hardship and provided also that the new loan does not exceed the value of the property.

A spokesman for Halifax Building Society, the largest mortgage lender, said it is already the society's policy to negotiate the payment of arrears over the whole life of the loan. But there is no question of debt forgiveness or soft terms and borrowers who allow arrears to build up will find it increasingly difficult to shift the arrears and accumulated interest. Their circumstances will usually have had to improve markedly to service the increased burden.

A borrower with arrears of £6,000 on a £50,000 mortgage at the society's current mortgage rate would have to pay an extra £45.41 a month on top of the normal payment of £352.68 a month on a repayment mortgage over 25 years. On an endowment policy it would require an extra £38.71 a month on top of the normal interest payment of £293.48 a month over the next 25 years.

There is no precedent for lengthening the life of the mortgage, although this was quite commonplace with repayment mortgages in the Seventies when many

borrowers were unable to cope with mortgage rates which surged at times to 15 per cent.

Building societies were also under attack last week because of their long-standing practice of re-calculating the outstanding balance on a repayment mortgage only once a year and charging interest on that amount for 12 months without taking intervening monthly repayments into account.

Endowment mortgages are not affected because the loan outstanding remains unchanged until it is redeemed by the maturing endowment policy. But researchers Mortgagecheck claimed that over 25 years it would create an overpayment of £2,306 on a £60,000 mortgage. Even over the average seven year life of a mortgage it would add £353 to the correct repayment. As many as six million borrowers with repayment mortgages could be affected, it claims.

"On examining the returns from actual borrowers we were amazed to find that interest is calculated on an annual basis and divided into 12 monthly repayments. This takes no account of the reduction in capital on a month-to-month basis, even though some of the lenders claim they apply interest on a daily basis," said Pat Wall,

chief executive at Mortgagecheck last week.

"Lenders such as Direct Line, Lloyds Bank and Midland Bank all charge fairly, by applying their interest charges on a reducing balance. There is no reason why the others should not be doing the same."

"Borrowers should prepare claims for historic overcharging and submit them to their lenders, who, we believe, should not hide behind the unfair terms and conditions of their contracts, but take a moral stance and refund claims."

The revelations come at a time when endowment mortgages have been criticised for poor performance which could result in them not building up enough capital to repay the mortgage in full when the policy matures. Many advisers now recommend repayment mortgages because they appear to contain no hidden catches.

But Halifax has been quick to accuse Mortgagecheck, whose research was commissioned by a Sunday newspaper, of needlessly alarming borrowers. "When asked to reconcile Mortgagecheck's figures we found the Halifax's figures to be entirely correct. The mistakes were Mortgagecheck's," a spokesman said.

"The way we calculate monthly repayments is based on a system called

annual rests, used by virtually every lender in the industry and by far the fairest method of calculating repayments. Our methods are straightforward and perfectly clear in the mortgage conditions sent to every borrower. The impact is also measured by the annual percentage rate (APR) quoted on loans."

If borrowers want to reduce interest charges, Halifax claims, they are free to make one-off lump sum repayments, which are deducted at the end of the month made and the monthly interest due is then recalculated.

Most societies require a minimum extra payment of £500 before they will recalculate the interest immediately, but Halifax will accept £250 and N&P as little as £100. Smaller sums will not be credited until the lender's year-end, which can vary. It always pays to check when your lender does its calculations. If you miss the annual review by a few days your money could be left lying fallow for up to another year.

The best advice is to pay small sums into an interest-bearing account until they grow to the point where they can be paid in (always close to the end of the month) and have an immediate impact on the balance outstanding. The same applies to voluntary overpayments.

Car screenings

Would you buy a used car from this kiosk? Clifford German on an alternative to salesmen

Would you buy a used car from a television screen equipped with a touch-pad housed in a nine-foot high blue kiosk? That is the question to which sponsors Camden Motors, Churchill Insurance, Olivetti and motor manufacturers Rover and Nissan are seeking an answer when they launch trials next week at eight sites in Nottingham and Slough.

At a touch on the screen the Auto-Select kiosk will start to provide information on new and used car prices throughout the UK, an estimated part-exchange value for existing vehicles, the availability and cost of finance.

It will also provide a printed insurance estimate and arrange a test drive. The voice of actor James Bolan provides step by step instructions on how to access the sections by touching selected boxes on the screen display, and the whole procedure takes three or four minutes.

Auto-Select is the brainchild of John Bacon, an executive director of Camden Motors, which is owned by Barclays Bank. He believes that most people are confused by the sheer choice of makes and models available in the UK, intimidated by car salesmen and reluctant to expose their ignorance.

"Add to this the options on extras, differing part-exchange values and a vast array of finance packages, and there is little doubt why customers are confused, he claims.

As a result many people have to make up their minds before they enter the show-



You can even arrange a test drive at a touch on the screen

room and do not have access to all the facts and options available, or the opportunity to "browse" before buying.

The insurance quote takes customers through half a dozen sequences starting off with a question as to the approximate age of the car required, which brings up information on 24 makes and 250 models covering an estimated 95 per cent of all vehicles which were available at the time.

After selecting a particular model the customer is asked for information on his or her age, address and postcode, and the value of the car.

A quick calculation generates a printed quote, which is not final, but gives a rough guide to the likely cost of insurance cover. If the answer is not satisfactory it is the work of a moment to thumb back through the questionnaire and select a different option until a realistic quote is obtained on a car which suits the customer's tastes and pocket.

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Getting warmer: having your loft insulated could save £70 a year

How to reduce your heating bills

And create a cleaner atmosphere into the bargain. By Mary Wilson

The cold snap is a timely reminder of the importance of efficient heating and insulation to save on heating bills. Since July this year all new homes have to be energy rated. The National Energy Foundation launched the National Home Energy Rating system (NHER) four years ago and this can give an owner or new purchaser some idea of what their fuel bills should be.

For an older home, you will also be able to find from their charts how much you could save in fuel bills if you improved your rating by one or two points. Anyone can have their home rated and NHER assessors charge from £50 to £130, depending on the size of the house and how far they have to travel.

This further emphasis on energy efficiency in our new housing stock is intended not only to reduce heating bills, but also an attempt to cut down the amount of carbon dioxide released in the atmosphere.

In 1992 the UK signed a United Nations convention on climate change committing developed countries to

reduce emissions to 1990 levels (600 million tonnes a year) by the year 2000.

Although this has now been achieved because coal fired gas stations have been replaced by gas fired stations, the amount of carbon dioxide emitted from homes accounts for around a third of the total, so there is room for even more improvement.

The energy used by the average home creates 7.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year and by taking some very simple steps homeowners can reduce this output by one-fifth to a half.

The national effect of an average grading improvement of just one out of 10 would cut total carbon dioxide emissions by 24 million tonnes a year.

The New Homes Marketing Board has just issued figures based on six properties, three new and three old, in separate locations around the UK, and these show very clearly that the age of a house has an important influence on carbon dioxide emissions.

A modern home produces about half the amount of carbon dioxide to a similarly sized old

house and is very much cheaper to run.

In Huddersfield, a new four-bedroom detached house had an NHER rating of 9.2 out of 10. The owners' first quarterly gas bill was 25 per cent less than the same period a year earlier when they lived in a smaller 1930s three bedroom semi, which had an energy rating of 5.5. The new house produces 5.4 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year compared with 8.7 tonnes produced by the older house.

A four-bedroom house near Nottingham was rated at 8.5, costing £650 a year to heat. A similar 1930s house costs £1,450 a year to heat and was rated 3.4. The carbon dioxide emissions were 6.9 tonnes for the new house compared with 17.7 tonnes for the older home.

The third comparison was a four-bedroom semi-detached house in Surrey, rated 9. This costs £630 in heating bills. A similarly sized Edwardian house cost £1,500 to heat and was rated at 4. It produced 17.9 tonnes of carbon dioxide compared with 5.8 tonnes in the new house.

Dr Eva Chapman, co-director of National Energy

Services, says that next year they are hoping to target the public to encourage them to have their homes rated so they can see how improvements can be made. "New houses have to be built to a better standard now," she says, "but owners of older properties can save on their fuel bills too, as well as reducing carbon dioxide emissions".

Lagging your hot water tank saves £10-£15 a year, using energy-saving light bulbs could save you up to £50 during the bulb's life and by turning down your thermostat by 1 per cent can cut up to 10 per cent off your fuel bills.

Fitting thermostatic radiator valves saves between £10 to £20 a year and draught-proofing windows and doors saves £10-£20. For more effective and more expensive methods of saving energy you could have your loft insulated, saving up to £70 per year, put in plastic secondary glazing, which cuts your bills by up to £25, and if you fitted an energy-efficient gas condensing boiler you could save up to £130.

Heat exchange systems, which extract hot stale air

from kitchens and bathrooms and convert it into cool clean air are also very effective and also good for your health, especially for asthmatics.

If you live in a house with a rating between 3 and 5, which is the average energy rating for an old house in the UK, by improving the insulation, putting in double glazing and installing a more efficient heating system you could improve the rating to 6. The improvements would cost about £10,000 but would bring your bills down by around £1,000 a year.

Other sources of information on saving energy can be obtained from the network of local Energy Advice Centres, which were set up in 1993 by the Environment Secretary, John Gummer. There are currently 32 centres around the country, managed by the National Energy Foundation.

The Foundation says that last year as a result of over 57,000 clients asking for advice, energy saving measures were installed saving £2m off fuel bills and preventing over 20,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere.

Their information pack suggests that an average household should be able to cut at least £100 a year off their fuel bills.

The pack includes a list of the most effective measures and the expected time taken for them to pay for themselves as a result of reduced energy bills.

Its tips include turning your heating down by one degree Celsius, keeping the lid on saucepans when cooking, using your heating for one hour less a day, insulating hot water pipes and, as an alternative to double glazing, taping polythene or cling-film across the window frames.

These may not be very radical steps, but every little helps.

National Home Energy Rating Scheme, National Energy Services, Rockingham Drive, Lintford Wood, Milton Keynes, MK14 6EG, 01908 672787. Contact your local Energy Advice Centre by telephoning 0800 512012. New Homes Marketing Board, 01 71 580 5588

Take an Irish punt

With low inflation, growth prospects and independence from UK markets it could be the European Tiger economy. By Clifford German

The Irish stock exchange finally declares independence from the London stock exchange next week, establishing the Irish market as a separate investment opportunity. Independence could work wonders for the rating of Irish stocks, according to Gervais Williams, who manages the Irish smaller companies investment trust launched six months ago by NatWest Investment Management.

Shares in the trust were placed with institutions at 98p and only a handful have seeped down to ordinary investors, which is just as well because the shares have drifted down to 93p and the fund now stands at a 10 per cent discount to net asset value. But a savings plan channelling anything from £30 a month into the trust is planned next month, which could arouse some interest from investors looking for a punt on the prospect of Ireland emerging as an European Tiger economy.

Irish share prices have moved closely in line with London stocks for the past decade, although the Irish economy has consistently outperformed the UK since 1988, with only a mild slowdown in the recession, and company profits have outgrown UK stocks.

As a result they now look cheap relative to the UK. The average price of the top 10 Irish stocks has fallen to just 10 times annual earnings compared with 14 times for the top 100 shares in the UK. The 67 small Irish companies are averaging 10.4 times this year's earnings compared with 13.1 times for the FT Small Companies index.

Irish stocks have been neglected because overseas funds have not channelled funds into specifically Irish stocks, but following the abolition of controls on outward investment in 1989 Irish institutions neglected their own stocks as they built up their holdings in overseas assets. That outflow has now stabilised and a bigger proportion of Irish investment is being invested at home.

Away from the London stock market the Irish stock market might now attract a separate allocation of external investment funds. Its market

capitalisation is tiny but even a modest allocation of capital from overseas institutions would work wonders for the ratings of Irish stocks.

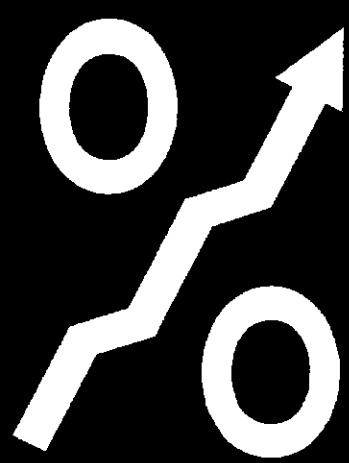
Ireland's growth prospects look good, with the economy expected to grow by 7 per cent this year and 5.5 per cent in 1996, while inflation remains below 3 per cent. For the next five years Ireland is assured of favoured category one EU status for investment incentives and the 10 per cent corporate tax rate for Irish exporters will last well into the next century. Investment capital is attracted by a cheap, well-educated labour force. The only major weakness, with the UK as Ireland's largest single market, is the relative strength of the currency against sterling. The food manufacturing sector is already mature, but the small company sector is set to benefit from a surge in consumer spending by Ireland's young and increasingly well-off population. NatWest likes the look of smaller companies in manufacturing, leisure, insurance and construction.

The trust's five largest holdings are the department store group Arnotts, Juras Hotels, the leading insurance company Hibernian, ferry operators Irish Continental, and a finance house, Woodchester Investments, where major stakeholder Credit Lyonnais could sell out and trigger a bid. It also holds 15 per cent stakes in Petroceltic which draws royalties from gas deposits under the Celtic Sea, and Irish Financial Group, a mortgage provider.

Perhaps 10 to 15 per cent of the NatWest fund is invested in Northern Irish stocks. Northern Ireland has a bigger manufacturing base and should also benefit from a surge in inward investment and Peace Grants, although the eight quoted Northern Irish shares have not yet been re-rated since the ceasefire, and might not suffer too severely from a breakdown, according to Gervais Williams.

The £21m raised by the fund when it was launched is now fully invested in 32 different stocks, but the managers intend to gear up by borrowing to expand the fund by 25 per cent.

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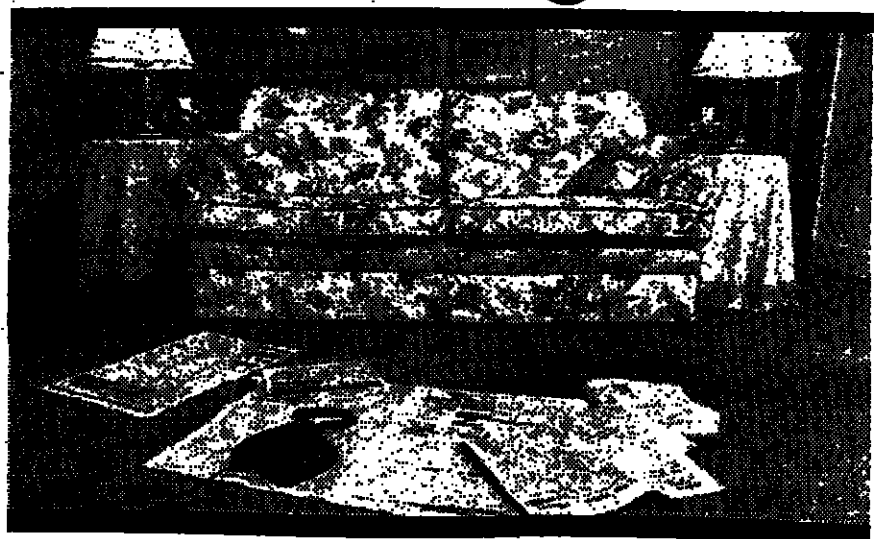
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Variable rates					
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	1.59 to 1/2/97	90	—	Refund valuation fee
Principality BS	01222 344188	4.65 to 31.1.98	75	—	Refund valuation fee
Abbey National	0800 555100	6.59 to 31/1/01	75	—	Refund valuation fee
First time buyers fixed rates					
Bristol & West BS	0800 100117	0.95 to 30/11/96	90	\$275	—
Newcastle BS	0191 244 2442	4.59 to 28/2/98	100	—	—
Cheshire BS	0800 243278	7.49 to 1/1/01	90	—	£300 cash rebate
First time buyers variable rates					
Scarborough BS	0800 590547	1.54 for 1 yr	95	—	£150 cash rebate
Greenwich BS	0181 858 8212	4.49 for 2 yrs	95	—	—
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	5.34 to 1/2/99	95	—	Refund valuation fee
PERSONAL LOANS					
Telephone	APR	Fixed monthly payments (£3,000 over 3 years)			
Unsecured					
Direct Line	0141 248 9966	14.90E			
Midland Bank	0800 180180	15.40			
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240024	16.20			
Secured (second charge)					
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240024	8.80			
Royal Bank of Scotland	Via branch	9.80			
First Direct	0800 242424	9.70			
OVERDRAFTS					
Telephone	Account	Authorised % pm APR	Unauthorised % pm APR		
Woolwich BS	0800 400900	Current	0.76 9.5		
Alliance & Leicester BS	0500 959595	Alliance	0.76 9.5		
Abbey National	0500 200500	Current	0.79 9.9		
CREDIT CARDS					
Telephone	Card	Min income	Rate %	APR %	Annual fee
Standard					
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	0.98G	12.40
Coutts & Co	0171 753 1718	Visa	—	0.9875	13.20
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	1.00	14.60
Gold cards					
Co-operative Bank	0345 212212	Visa	£20,000	0.5625M	11.42
Royal Bank of Scotland	01702 362890	Visa	£20,000	1.05	14.50
NorthWest Bank	0800 200400	Visa	£20,000	1.14	15.90
STORE CARDS					
Telephone	Payment by direct debit	APR	Payment by other methods	APR	
John Lewis	Via store	—	1.39	18.00	
Marks and Spencer	01244 681681	1.90A	25.30	2.00A	
Sears	Via store	1.94	25.90	2.20	

APR Annualised percentage rate.

1.59% £20 6% APR for 6 mths over £1K.

C Available to customers under business prepayments aged over 22 years.

H Annual fee waived after first year if £1M+ charged in card during previous year.

All rates subject to change without notice.

ITV Loan to value

C Clients of Coutts & Co only

D No interest free period.

G Annual rate 5% above R Fleming base rate.

M Equivalent to base rate.

01682 590677

7 December 1995

Best savings rates

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
INSTANT ACCESS					
Portman BS	01202 292444	Instant Access	Instant	£100	5.00
Skipton BS	01756 700511	3 High Street	Instant	£2,000	5.60
Co-operative Bank	0345 252000	Pathfinder	Instant	£5,000	5.90
Northern Rock BS	0500 505000	Go Direct	Instant	£20,000	6.10
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS					
Britannia BS	01538 392808	Capital Trust	Postal	£2,000	5.60
B&W Asset	0800 303330	Instant Access	Postal	£10,000	6.05
Northern Rock BS	0500 505000	Go Direct	Postal	£20,000	6.10
B&W Asset	0800 303330	Instant Access	Postal	£25,000	6.25
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS					
Nottingham BS	0115 946 1444	Postmark	7 day P	£2,500	5.90
Scarborough BS	0800 590578	Scarborough 50	50 day	£1,000	6.20
Northern Rock BS	0500 505000	Postal 90	90 day P	£10,000	6.80
Halifax BS	Local branch	Special Reserve	1 year bond	£10,000	6.90
MONTHLY INTEREST					
Co-operative Bank	0345 252000	Pathfinder	Instant	£5,000	5.90
Portman BS	01202 292444	Monthly Interest	1 month	£20,000	6.30
Leopold Joseph & Sons	0171 585 2323	40 Day Notice	40 day	£10,000	6.6875
Northern Rock BS	0500 505000	Postal 90	90 day P	£25,000	6.79
FIXED RATE BONDS					
TSB	Via Branch	Term Deposit	1 yr bond	£2,000	6.50F
Barclays Bank	0800 400100	Investment Bond	2 yr bond	£2,000	6.75F
B'ham Midshires BS	0645 720721	Quantum Fixed	3 yr bond	£5,000	7.25F
B'ham Midshires BS	0645 720721	Millennium Bond	4 yr bond	£5,000	7.75F
TESSA (tax exempt special savings accounts)					
Sun Banking Corp	01438 744505	—	5 year	£8,575	7.25F
Allied Trust Bank	0171 626 0879	—	5 year	£9,000	7.50
Cheltenham & Gloucester	0800 717505	—	5 year	£9,000	7.25
Melton Mowbray BS	01664 63937	—	5 year	£1	7.10
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS					
AIG Life	0181 680 7172	—	1 year	£5,000	4.55FN
AIG Life	0181 680 7172	—	2 year	£1,000	4.90FN
Financial Assurance	0181 490 9157	—	3 year	£20,000	5.20FN
Premium Life	01444 458721	—	4 year	£1,000	5.60FN
Pinnacle Insurance	0181 207 9007	—	5 year	£3,000	6.45FN
DISCREET INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS					
Newcastle Bank, Gibr	00 350 76168	Nova Access	Instant	£5,000	6.20
Newcastle Bank, Gibr	00 350 76168	Nova 90 O'shore	90 day	£25,000	6.85
Alliance & Leicester	01624 663566	Investment Bond	1 yr bond	£10,000	7.00
B'ham Midshires, Guein	01481 700680	Fixed Account	31.1.99	£5,000	7.25F
NATIONAL SAVINGS (tax exempt bonds)					
Investment Account	1 month	£20	£20	5.25	Year
Income Bond	3 month	£25,000	£25,000	6.00	Year
Capital Bond	5 year	£100	£100	7.75 F	OM
First Option Bond	12 month	£1,000	£1,000	6.40 F	Year
Pensioners' G'ated Income Bond	5 year	£500	£500	7.50 F	Month
NS Certificates (tax-free)	42nd issue	5 year	£100	5.85 F	OM
8th Index linked	5 year	£100	£100	3.00 F + infln.	OM
Childrens Bond Issue G (tax-free)	5 year	£25	£25	7.85 F	OM

FEAR OF FINANCE
Clifford German

On the face of it it has been another bad week for the personal finance industry, with the Consumers' Association criticising the quality of financial advice given by some independent financial advisers, many accountants and solicitors and most tied agents, the Court of Appeal opening a precedent for borrowers in arrears to insist on rescheduling their debts over the whole life of their mortgage, and the Banking Ombudsman launching a bitter attack on mortgage lenders for failing to give refunds on mortgage indemnity guarantee policies when they are no longer required.

Opinion polls still suggest that less than half the adult population has a clue, or even a care, about personal finance generally. There is also a deep-seated reluctance on the part of the punters to buy insurance products which they might not need, like private health insurance and long-term health care, or where they feel the cover is likely to be expensive, and possibly unsuitable for their needs. Mortgage protection policies, which do not pay out immediately, cease payment after as little as twelve months, and disqualify many people who are self-employed or working on short-term contracts are a case in point.

Perhaps it would be better if the Government stopped equivocating over its long-term commitment to the National Health Service and made it clear just where it intends to withdraw, or to reduce the quality of service to the most rudimentary level.

The case for the Government to make some forms of insurance provisions, including minimum percentages of earnings to be contributed to pension plans, mandatory, in the same way that minimum motor insurance is mandatory, is looking stronger by the minute, although it may be something they would

prefer to leave it to a Labour administration to introduce. Individuals inevitably tend to postpone investments until they are convinced that prices are rising, by which time prices are looking expensive and set to fall. This has bedevilled the unit trust industry for years and has only been partly offset by Peps with long-term tax attractions.

The attractions of so-called guaranteed products, which protect capital against loss in return for a limited participation in investment gains, is a clear indication of the longing for certainty and security, and is something the majority of investment-based products cannot give. No amount of tax-sheltering can protect investment products against the twin ravages of inflation and market competition.

But at least there is no shortage of publicity, the media is picking on issues in need of debate, the Government is committed to strengthening the regulatory authorities, and the codes of practice established over the last decade are gradually raising the skills and standards of practitioners in the industry.

In some areas it has been a case of one step forward after two steps backwards. Many cheerful purchasers of endowment mortgages and personal pensions have been horrified by revelations of the extent to which their investments have been ravaged by front-end commissions and charges, and have withdrawn from the market. But the long-term move to greater choice, clarity and access to information is highly desirable.

Government however could help by drawing up long-term plans quickly so that older investors are not tempted to delay decisions. And financial institutions could play a part by offering flexible products which could be bought now in the knowledge that they could be applied to a variety of future needs as they arise.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO RETIRE WITH A MILLION - START TAKING YOUR OWN ADVICE.



"At last it is possible for a normal human being to learn the ins-and-outs of money-management and investing without all sorts of pompous and confusing technical twaddle... The Successful Personal Investing programme from IRS is like a great breath of fresh air."

Douglas Moffitt, TV and Radio Financial Commentator

AND IF YOUR MIND clamps shut at the mere mention of the word million, consider this: if you add up your lifetime earnings - past and future - you will see that you will almost certainly earn a fortune in your lifetime. It could add up to a million pounds - or more.

The trouble is, like most people you'll earn it - and spend it.

Of course, what you could be doing is taking this fortune and turning some of it into another fortune - the one you want to end up with.

But you'll probably say you've been too busy to attend to this yourself... or perhaps managing money today just seems too complicated...

Then there's the myth that somewhere out there - if only you could find him - is a friendly, honest person who is going to give you sound and impartial advice on what best to do with your hard-earned money.

THE REALITY is somewhat different. The person you are looking for may not exist! Unless you are already a millionaire - or close to it - there is virtually no such thing as top quality independent financial advice today.

The shocking fact is that most professional advisers are, on the whole, just simply not much good at what they do.

Take investing in the Stockmarket. Common research clearly shows that most professional investors and advisers - such as stockbrokers and unit trust managers - actually do more poorly than the Stockmarket as a whole.

IN FACT the widely-accepted Random Walk theory says that you will beat the pros at picking shares by simply blindfolding yourself and sticking a pin in the share table in your newspaper. Incredible, but true.

Look at unit trusts. The vast majority of them underperform the Stockmarket in general over time. They would have actually lost you money compared to buying shares at random!

So the question is: Why pay fat commissions and management fees to have a so-called professional manage your money?

The answer is... don't!

But... let's face it... most people find today's world of personal finances too complicated - and too baffling. In short, they're stuck. They are successful in many other respects. But when it comes to investing and money management they have no real plan. All because there's been no simple way to get started. That is, until now...

SUCCESSFUL PERSONAL INVESTING (SPI) is the much acclaimed up-to-the-minute "hands-on", self-instruction course in investing and money management that you follow at home - at your own pace - with no pressure in simple language it outlines step-by-step how to build your own financial

independence... and how to take the million or so you'll probably earn in your lifetime and get started on building the million you want to end up with... and all without depending on some "advice"... and without paying through the nose for advice that isn't truly independent.

THE SPI COURSE starts with the basics and then goes on to the "tricks of the trade" - the simple, tried and true techniques that enable you to protect and then pyramid profits to build wealth even faster.

First - you'll quickly see how to "uncover" up to an extra £2,000 a year to invest - money you probably didn't even know you had.

Second - you'll be surprised at how easy it is to learn how to evaluate pension schemes... gifts... shares...

Personal Equity Plans... Enterprise Investment Schemes... property investments... simple strategies that can slash your tax bill... In fact, all the important areas of investing and money management.

Third - And maybe most rewarding you'll learn in detail about a number of crafty but simple "behind-the-scenes" techniques that you don't usually get to find out about at all. The kind that can often boost your returns 20, 30, even 50 per cent more - sometimes just in months - not years.

FOR EXAMPLE, a little technique called a "straddle", lets you bet that the Stockmarket will go up - and at the same time bet that it will go down - believe it or not, it is perfectly possible to make a profit whether it goes up or goes down!

Or how you can use your pension plan to turn \$750 into \$1000 overnight - or more if you're a higher rate taxpayer. Of course there's a good deal more. But as you can see Successful Personal Investing is definitely not just some collection of "hot tips" or boring technical mumbo-jumbo.

Always everything is spelled out step-by-step, like a simple recipe. So you take just those steps that are right for your own circumstances.

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Let's face it - most people spend more time planning a fortnight's holiday than learning how to manipulate their money.

Surprisingly, SPI takes only a couple of hours of your time a month. There is no burning of the midnight oil.

True, money isn't everything. But it does help. SPI shows you how to start on the way towards having that million - and being able to tell yourself that you're a "millionaire". So, before your mind clamps shut over that word again... why not at least take the opportunity to see for yourself? You can now get to look over the first two lessons with no obligation for 10 days just by posting the coupon below. And whatever you decide, Lesson 1 is yours to keep - FREE!

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money pensions



Peter Lilley, Social Security Minister, is the driving force of the campaign to persuade people to take responsibility for their own financial futures

Pensions: start here

Britain's pension revolution has stalled. At a time when the idea of private pension provision commands more support among Britain's politicians than ever before, sales of personal pensions to individuals are plummeting.

The arguments for private pensions are well understood. The healthier, wealthier populations of the developed world are living longer in retirement, imposing an increasing pensions burden on the taxpayer's workforce. If Western governments are to avoid spiralling taxation, they must attempt a two-pronged assault on the problem - cutting state social security benefits and encouraging people to save more towards their own retirement.

This logic, once resisted by Labour, is increasingly accepted by Tony Blair and his team.

Pension experts fear the message has still to get across to the man in the street. Changes already made to the state earnings-related pension scheme (Serps) will significantly reduce its value for those retiring in the next century. The increase in the female retirement age from 60 to 65 also threatens to impose an additional burden on many families.

Pension companies believe the Government has failed to make it clear how these and other changes will cut back the support available from the welfare state. Tony Reardon, pensions development director at the insurance company Allied Dunbar, says: "The Government has got to be honest with the public and say, 'We are reducing state pensions'. I would like to see the Government doing a lot more advertising on pensions."

With a large and growing need for private pension provision, Britain's pensions industry should be enjoying a bonanza. But the opposite is true. This year's sales of regular-premium pensions policies (where you save monthly) look set to reach little more than half the number sold in 1991.

This paradox is explained by the two huge scandals that hit the pensions industry in recent years. Personal pensions, first introduced in 1989, appeared to have been a great success story for the life insurance industry, with more than five million policies sold.

But two years ago, it became clear that hundreds of thousands of investors had been badly advised either to leave good company pension schemes, or to

transfer previously accumulated retirement savings into a personal pension. The cost of putting right the resulting financial damage has been estimated at anything up to £4bn. Public confidence in the life insurance industry, never strong, was dealt another heavy blow. Financial watchdogs pushed through a wide-ranging series of reforms to prevent a repetition.

Many financial advisers seem to have concluded that selling personal pensions is more trouble than it is worth. On top of the usual checks they have to make when selling financial product to a client, personal pensions involve another layer of complexity.

Alan Goodman, assistant general manager with the insurance giant Standard Life, says: "It's extremely difficult to buy a personal pension these days - and equally difficult for someone to sell the product and go through the whole lengthy process."

Insurers have adopted so-called transfer analysis systems to assess any potential customer considering switching his accumulated company pension savings into a personal plan. Mr Reardon is sceptical about how much benefit investors derive from the highly complicated documents that

emerge from transfer analyses. "Producing these analyses does not always help the client," he says. "They protect the adviser."

The Robert Maxwell affair, the other pensions scandal of the Nineties, damaged public confidence in the other side of the private pensions industry - employer-run schemes. Its most lasting effect has been a new Pensions Act, which has introduced new solvency requirements for company schemes and other safeguards.

Some fear that the Pensions Act will reinforce the move away from "final salary" schemes - the traditional type of company pension that pays beneficiaries an income based on their earnings in the last years before retirement. Anxious to control costs, employers increasingly favour schemes in which they can fix the level of contributions. Employees belonging to these "money purchase" schemes have much less idea of the level of pension they can expect to receive when they retire.

One factor that should encourage more people to save more for retirement is the increased recognition of the problem the elderly face in paying for long-term care. In his recent Budget, the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, promised a range of measures to encour-

age saving for long-term care - including a tax exemption for benefits paid by specialist insurance policies. He is also considering allowing occupational pension schemes to pay variable pensions - which could pay a small income immediately upon retirement, and a larger amount in later years, when more people are likely to need long-term care.

This could offer some pensioners useful additional flexibility. Unfortunately, few people retire with enough savings to allow them to defer the greater part of their pension for a few years. Most go for the highest pensions they can, because they need to.

Similar problems arise with flexible annuities, which allow people to defer taking their pension in the hope of being able to make their decision in a more favourable interest rate environment. In the meantime, they can draw upon the income earned by their pension fund. But this will be substantially less than their pension entitlement. And pensioners who opt for a flexible annuity must also accept further uncertainty over the future performance of their pot of pension savings.

Paul Durman

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Opting-out

A bad risk for the low-paid

Thousands of people could still be putting their pension unwittingly and needlessly at risk by opting out of the state earnings related pension scheme (Serps). This is a pension paid to employees on top of the basic state pension.

The Government introduced contracting out through personal pensions in 1988 as a way to cut the cost of state pension benefits. By encouraging employees to take more responsibility for their own pension, it hoped to avoid the build-up of a crippling pensions bill in a few decades' time.

Those who contract out of Serps receive a rebate of some of their National Insurance contribution. You can't get you hands on this money directly, but you can have the rebate paid into a personal pension.

To help get personal pensions off the ground, the Government also paid an additional incentive on top of this rebate. This was initially worth 2 per cent of band earnings -

essentially those up to the National Insurance ceiling - and reduced to 1 per cent from the 1993/94 tax year. These incentives proved so popular that nearly 6 million employees signed up for a contracted-out personal pension.

However, concern is growing that many of those who contracted out were on incomes too low to allow them to benefit. The average earnings of men who have contracted out are under £10,000, the average for women about £6,300, and the amount of Serps rebate paid into their personal pension is too small for them to benefit after they have paid the charges made by the pension provider.

The chief financial regulator, the Securities and Investments Board, is investigating the size of the problem. "We've commissioned a firm of actuaries to talk to about 20 life insurance companies," says a SIB spokeswoman. "They've been looking at the

number of policies sold, the charges made and the age profile of the policyholders." SIB expects to publish its findings by the end of the year.

It is also feared that others are neglecting to review their position. This is necessary because, say the experts, being contracted-out stops making sense around the ages of 35 for women and 40 for men. For those at this age who have previously contracted out, contracting back in may well be the best move.

The decision of whether to contract out, or whether you have now reached an age where you should contract back in, is further complicated by proposed changes to the rebates due to take effect in 1997. The Government is working on a scheme to give age-related benefits. In theory, this should make contracting out much more attractive to older people.

Anthony Bailey

Personal pensions

More than 100 companies offer a plan. Which one is right for me?

If you are self-employed or your employer does not offer a company pension scheme, investing in your own personal pension is the most tax-efficient way to save for your retirement.

You need to choose a pension provider with good, consistent performance and reasonable policy charges to get the most out of your money. You should also look for a plan which is flexible enough to fit in with changes in your lifestyle - one that allows you to alter the size of your premiums, to stop and start payments and to retire at any age without penalty.

But how do you go about selecting the right one? With more than 100 insurance and investment companies offering their own ranges of pension products, the choice may seem endless.

If you decide to aim for a pension income worth half your salary at the age of, say, 55, a competent pensions adviser should be able to calculate how much you should save to attain that level of income. But Nick Bamford of the independent financial adviser Informed Choice, warns: "Then the client has to decide how much they can actually afford. The later you leave saving towards your pension, the more expensive it will be to provide a reasonable income."

There is a good argument for everyone to make single premium pension contributions. Not only are the charges generally lower, but single premiums are not subject to the hefty penalties for stopping further payments. This makes them particularly suitable for women who think they may want to take a career break to have children, or people who want time off work to travel or study.

It may be advisable to ask for a "waiver of premium" benefit to pay contributions during a long period of illness.

A competent adviser should be able to guide you through past performance tables and the different charging structures. Martin Beckett of the independent adviser Pionton, York, says: "If the client has 10 years or less to go to retirement, they are probably likely to be more cautious and might look at a with-profits fund."

"You want a company with the ability to maintain bonuses. Equitable Life has an undeniably good with-profits record. Commercial Union is a very strong office and Standard Life is another good all-round company we would consider."

Those who have more than 10 years to go before retirement should consider what is called a unit-linked fund,

which gives returns directly linked to the stock market.

Mr Beckett says: "The criteria here would be good consistent performance and a fair charging structure. One of my favourites for the more aggressive and adventurous type of investor is Skandia Life."

The charging structure of pension policies varies enormously from company to company and depending on the type of policy you choose. Despite the introduction of disclosure rules at the beginning of the year, many charges remain hidden.

However, when you buy a plan you are given projections of the effect of its charges. Total charges can seem high - as much as a third of the total pension savings you might accumulate over a 25 year period and typically a fifth over this timeframe.

Look for an independent financial adviser who offers the choice of either being paid by a fee by you or of receiving commission from the company whose products he sells.

The commission on a one-off payment of, for example, £2,000 would typically be 5 per cent or £100. But a fee for the same advice could cost you £300 to £400.

Anthony Bailey

صكا من الامل

Topping up

For a fuller retirement

Of all the employees in company pension schemes, only one in 10 retires on the full amount of pension allowed by the Inland Revenue. Like-wise very few people who are currently investing in a personal pension plan are putting in the maximum amount permissible under Revenue rules.

Most people leave saving for their retirement too late. By the time they start thinking about putting some money away, they actually need to save hundreds of pounds a month to sustain the kind of lifestyle they have in mind. And company schemes do not make full use of contribution limits.

However, provided they have cash to spare, there are several tax-efficient ways to top up their pension.

All companies with pension schemes must, by law, offer an additional voluntary contribution scheme (AVC) for members of the main pension scheme. An AVC is run as a separate fund to the main pension scheme, and its management may be farmed out to a third party – a life office or building society. It enjoys nearly all the same tax breaks as the main pension scheme – members' contributions are taken from their pay before tax, given relief from income tax at their highest rate, and contributions grow tax-free within the fund.

Many employers subsidise the management charges, making the AVC a very cost-effective way to invest – most, if not all, of the contributions will be invested for the benefit of the employee. Contributions are paid net of basic-rate tax. This means that for every £100 the investor wishes to contribute to his AVC, he pays £75 and the insurance company claims the remaining £25 from the Inland Revenue. Higher-rate taxpayers must claim any further relief through their tax returns.

It is also possible to choose your own top-up policy, which is known as a free-standing AVC. FSACs are sold by insurance companies on a commercial basis, and are not subsidised by the employer, so charges can seem high in comparison to an AVC. Members of company schemes can contribute up to 15 per cent of their total remuneration – basic salary plus any bonuses and commission – into pension schemes, including an AVC or FSAC. So if a scheme member is already contributing 5 per cent of his earnings to the main pension scheme, he could put a further 10 per cent into an AVC.

AVCs are simple money-purchase schemes. The money an employee invests plus any growth is used to buy an income annuity at the time of retirement. However, the best way to top up an occupational pension is not with an AVC but through buying "added years". This option is usually only open to members of "final-salary" public sector pension schemes, but some private company schemes have also adopted this approach.

Each year that an employee belongs to a final-salary scheme entitles him to a portion of his final salary as retirement income. For example, he might belong to a scheme that pays him 1/80th of his final salary for every year. The advantage of buying extra years is that although the employer can estimate the effect of inflation on the value of an employee's salary over the period to retirement and charge accordingly, the company cannot predict salary increases that result from promotion. This means the employee can benefit from a substantially higher retirement income without having to pay for it.

Self-employed investors and employees who are not able to join a company pension scheme should make the most of investing into a



Bill Lane and his wife Sally are both topping up their company pension schemes so they have the option to retire at the age of 50. Bill, a 35-year-old computer salesman, earns a basic salary and commission. His company pension scheme contributions are based on the basic wage plus half his on-target commission earnings. As he regularly earns in excess of his target, Bill was worried that his pension would not reflect his current income.

Bill's company offered just one AVC scheme which did not suit his needs, so he has chosen a free-standing AVC from Skandia Life. The scheme's investment projections indicate that it has the lowest charges, and it offers the choice of more than 200 funds, managed by the UK's leading investment houses. He is currently paying contributions of £250 a month.

Despite the extra contributions, Bill is still not saving enough to be able to retire on the income he would like at the age of 50. He says: "I'm still well short of the target, but I'm also investing the maximum amount possible in Peps, and was a heavy investor in business expansion schemes."

Sally, at the age of 29, is unusually young to be topping up her pension. She wants to invest as much as she can now in case she needs to take a career break to have children.

Her employer, Marks & Spencer, runs a final-salary scheme that allows members to buy added years. Sally has bought 10.6 extra years, at the cost of £120 a month.

personal pension. Very few people invest as much as they can into personal schemes – from 17.5 per cent of net relevant earnings for anyone aged 35 or less to 40 per cent for those aged 61 to 74.

If an investor has used up the current year's allowance, he should be able to mop up any unused allowance and tax relief from the previous six years – a process known as "carry forward". This means that if a 35-year-old investor only used 10 per cent of his allowance six years ago, he can contribute the remaining 7.5 per cent now on top of this year's allowance.

Investors can also "carry back" contributions to the previous tax year. This allows the contribution to be treated tax-wise as

though it had been paid into the pension scheme in the preceding year – a process that can help those who are trying to minimise their income tax bill. Both carry forward and carry back are extremely complicated, and anyone interested in pursuing these options should consult an accountant or pensions adviser.

Richard Jacobs of Richard Jacobs Pension and Trustee Services says investors who want to maximise the flexibility of their retirement arrangements should also invest in personal equity plans. He argues that Peps offer equivalent tax advantages but unlike pensions – which only pay out at retirement – capital and income can be withdrawn from a Pep at

any time. "This makes them ideal for the one-off expenses that can occur at any time, or to supplement a pensioner's income until he reaches state pension age," he says.

Claire Arthur

Investment strategy

Use your freedom of choice

One of the little-known secrets about personal pensions is how much choice policyholders have to pick their own investment strategy.

Of the billions of pounds that flow into personal pension funds every year, 90 per cent goes straight into mainstream "managed" or "with-profits" funds.

Few personal pension holders in the UK take the time to examine other choices, even though a pension is the single biggest investment most people make in a lifetime. Yet nearly all pension providers now allow planholders to review their investment on a regular basis.

As you get closer to retirement you should reduce the level of risk to which your money is exposed. When you are five years away from being a pensioner, it is simply too dangerous to leave your pension savings in a volatile fund even if it is rocketing upwards in value. It could just as easily plummet in value just before you retire, leaving you with a meagre income for the rest of your life.

With-profits and unitised with-profits plans are the low-to-medium risk investment choice that most people pick. Money is invested in a mix of investments – gilts, stocks and shares and property. Profits made by these investments are accrued to the plan each year in the form of a reversionary bonus – a value which cannot be taken away from the plan, such that the value of your pension pot only rises. When the plan matures, a final bonus is added. Its size varies significantly from one company to the next. A unitised with-profits plan runs on similar lines, with money allocated to units in the with-profits fund.

Unit-linked managed funds also invest in a three-way split of property, shares and bonds, and are considered medium-risk. However, unlike with-profits plans, unit-linked policies do

not benefit from the addition of guaranteed bonuses each year. The value of the units will rise and fall in line with the value of the underlying assets.

Self-invested personal pensions or Sips are really only suitable for the financially sophisticated, offering the greatest freedom of choice and the highest potential risk.

They can invest in anything that produces an income.

Copies of the Money Marketing 1995 Unit-Linked and With-Profits Surveys are available on 0171 439 4222 and are priced at £3 each.

Patrick Collinson

"...one of the top performing pension funds available..."

THE FINANCIAL TIMES APRIL 1995

A Pension Fund from one of the UK's oldest established investment trust companies has been rated by The Financial Times as one of the top performing, lowest cost pensions available*. Cost is important – with some plans, charges can reduce your savings significantly**.

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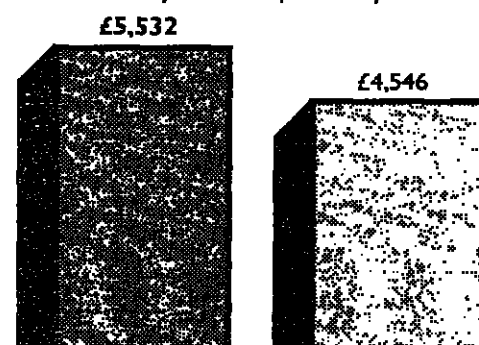
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As you can see from this comparison chart, Royal Liver's BONUS BUILDER significantly out-performed the average Building Society +1.5% extra interest account. And has done so consistently over the past five years.



ROYAL LIVER Building Society

Building Society figures are as at 18.5.95

Source: Microplan

This chart compares a typical +1.5% Building Society investment account with Royal Liver's BONUS BUILDER, a 10 year with-profit investment plan. Both are based on a £20 monthly premium invested by a male aged 29 next birthday, at entry. Returns are net of basic rate income tax.

Please remember that while you can take your money from a Building Society account at any time, BONUS BUILDER is designed to provide a worthwhile return for your savings over the longer term.

Fast performance is no guarantee of future returns

FB 855

ROYAL LIVER ASSURANCE
(An Incorporated Friendly Society) Regulated by the Personal Investment Authority

New providers

Fund managers have ideas for your savings. Just add a pensions wrapper

Anyone looking for a personal pension has traditionally had to turn to a life insurance company. But in the last year or so, a handful of City investment managers has also made a bid for your retirement savings. The new providers' main claim is that they can manage your money much more cheaply than the life insurers. They have simply added a "pensions wrapper" to add the usual pension tax advantages to their existing investment trusts or unit trusts. These are collective funds that diversify risk by spreading investors' money across a broad range of shares.

The potential savings look impressive. Flemings, for example, says an investor saving £200 a month for 10 years will end up more than £3,500 better off than if he chose a personal pension from Legal & General, assuming the same investment returns. The same Flemings investment trust pension is also at least £1,400 cheaper than pensions from Clerical Medical, Scottish Equitable, Norwich Union and Standard Life – all leading companies.

Daniel Godfrey, marketing director of Fleming Investment Trust Management, said the new pension accounts have attracted hundreds of customers since their

October launch. Foreign & Colonial, manager of Britain's biggest and best-known investment trust, has also had a good response to its investment trust pension, introduced last year.

Investors seem to have found unit trust pensions much less attractive – probably because of the 5 per cent initial charge made on investments into unit trusts. Although this charge seems high compared with investment trust pensions, it leaves the management company with very little to offer in the way of commission to financial advisers. Insurers have rightly been criticised for their upfront charges, but some of that money is paid to the financial adviser or salesman for explaining the issues.

Framlington introduced its unit trust pension a year ago. Anne McMeekan, marketing director of Framlington, says: "I happen to think that the Framlington pension plan is an extraordinarily good one. But just because it's good does not mean it's persuading millions of people to get one."

Pensions are a complicated area, and few investors are capable or confident enough to decide what they need without the help of advice.

Charles Levett-Scrivener of Towry Law, a large firm of financial advisers, says the

lower commissions paid on investment and unit trust pensions "is not nearly enough to reward anybody giving advice on these products". Interested investors unsure of what they want may therefore have to pay for advice – thereby reducing or eliminating the claimed cost advantage.

Flemings and Foreign & Colonial allow you to invest your pension in one or more of their investment trusts. The exact level of charges you pay will depend on your selection. The more esoteric trusts tend to have much higher levels of management expenses than the general or UK-only trusts.

The flattering cost comparisons are based on an assumed investment trust management fee – a modest 0.5 per cent in Flemings' case. The trusts you select may be more expensive.

David Graham, head of marketing at Scottish Widows, doubts that investment managers can claim any lasting cost advantage over life insurers, who have the benefit of large volumes of business. "We also have the expertise, the systems and the experience to handle the changes in legislation," he adds.

Mr Levett-Scrivener is also concerned that investment trust pensions do not offer the life insurance benefits that are important features of

insured pension plans. He thinks the lack of "waiver of premium" benefit is particularly important. This ensures that premiums will continue to be paid into your pension should you become too ill to work.

Investors must always be wary of claims based on past performance, because there is no guarantee that good results will continue into the future. Be particularly careful about comparing investment and unit trust returns with an insurer's managed pension fund. Managed funds typically invest some money in fixed-interest securities and commercial property, not just in shares.

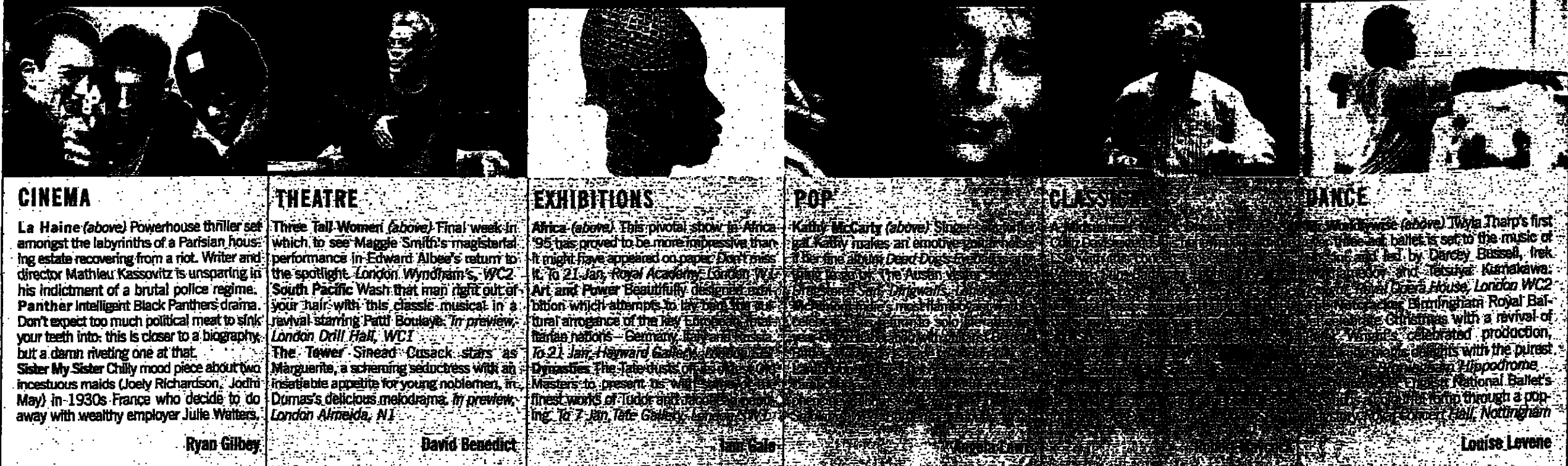
Mr Godfrey concedes that investment trust discounts may worry some investors. Shares in investment trusts typically trade for less than the value of their underlying investments and this gap – the discount – can either narrow or widen.

But the new products are not for everybody, and their drawbacks need to be properly considered before you make an investment.

Their dependence on share performance makes them potentially much more volatile than traditional insured pension plans.

Paul Durman

critics' choice



CINEMA

La Haine (above) Powerful thriller set amongst the labyrinthine of a Parisian housing estate recovering from a riot. Writer and director Mathieu Kassovitz is not writing his indictment of a brutal police regime. Panther intelligent Black Panthers drama. Don't expect too much political meat to sink your teeth into: this is closer to a biography, but a damn riveting one at that. *Sister My Sister* Chilly mood piece about two incestuous males (Joely Richardson, Jodie May) in 1930s France who decide to do away with wealthy employer Julie Walters.

Ryan Gilbey

THEATRE

Three Tall Women (above) Final week in which to see Maggie Smith's magisterial performance in Edward Albee's return to the spotlight. **London Wyndham's WC2** South Pacific Wash that map right out of your chair with this classic musical in a revival starring Patti Boulaye. *In preview: London Drill Hall, WC1* The **Tower Street** - Cusack stars as Marguerite, a scheming seductress with an insatiable appetite for young noblemen, in Domini's delicious melodrama. *In preview: London Almeida, N1*

David Benedict

EXHIBITIONS

Africa (above) This pivotal show in Africa 95 has proved to be more impressive than it might have appeared on paper. *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Royal Academy, London, W1* Art and Power Beautifully designed exhibition which attempts to lay bare the cultural atmosphere of the New World. *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Hayward Gallery, London, E14* **Shakespeare** The latest in the series of Shakespeare's works, this exhibition is a must-see. *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Tate Gallery, London, W1*

POP

Kathy McCarty (above) She's got it all. Kathy McCarty is an emotive performer. *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Royal Academy, London, W1* **Art and Power** Beautifully designed exhibition which attempts to lay bare the cultural atmosphere of the New World. *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Hayward Gallery, London, E14* **Shakespeare** The latest in the series of Shakespeare's works, this exhibition is a must-see. *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Tate Gallery, London, W1*

CLASSICAL

Wyla Tharp (above) Wyla Tharp's first ballet is set to the music of... *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Royal Academy, London, W1* **Art and Power** Beautifully designed exhibition which attempts to lay bare the cultural atmosphere of the New World. *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Hayward Gallery, London, E14* **Shakespeare** The latest in the series of Shakespeare's works, this exhibition is a must-see. *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Tate Gallery, London, W1*

DANCE

Wyla Tharp (above) Wyla Tharp's first ballet is set to the music of... *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Royal Academy, London, W1* **Art and Power** Beautifully designed exhibition which attempts to lay bare the cultural atmosphere of the New World. *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Hayward Gallery, London, E14* **Shakespeare** The latest in the series of Shakespeare's works, this exhibition is a must-see. *Don't miss it to 21 Jan, Tate Gallery, London, W1*

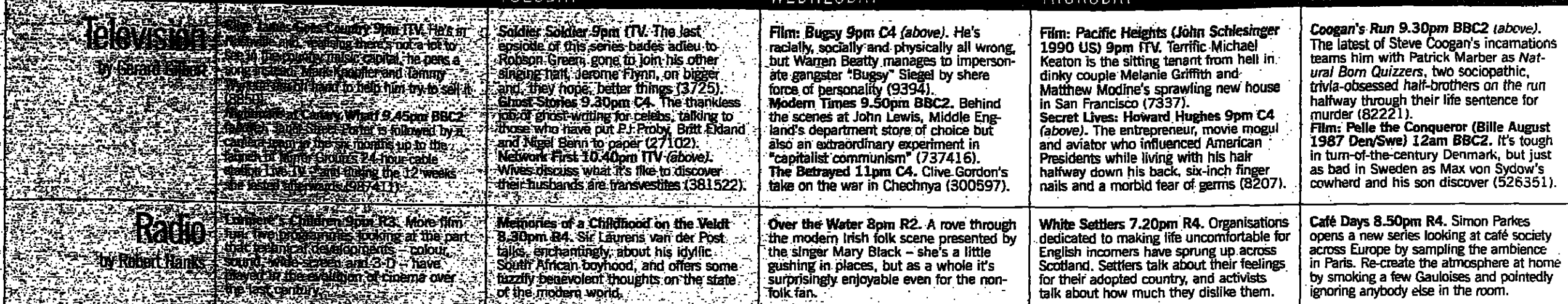
Louise Lervine

arts and entertainment listings

FILM

WEST END

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THE ANATOMY OF A MURDER (12) The president falls for an environmental lobbyist. *Emper* Leicester Square 1.00, 2.00, 3.00, 4.00, 5.00, 6.00, 7.00, 8.00, 9.00, 10.00, 11.00, 12.00, 13.00, 14.00, 15.00, 16.00, 17.00, 18.00, 19.00, 20.00, 21.00, 22.00, 23.00, 24.00, 25.00, 26.00, 27.00, 28.00, 29.00, 30.00, 31.00, 32.00, 33.00, 34.00, 35.00, 36.00, 37.00, 38.00, 39.00, 40.00, 41.00, 42.00, 43.00, 44.00, 45.00, 46.00, 47.00, 48.00, 49.00, 50.00, 51.00, 52.00, 53.00, 54.00, 55.00, 56.00, 57.00, 58.00, 59.00, 60.00, 61.00, 62.00, 63.00, 64.00, 65.00, 66.00, 67.00, 68.00, 69.00, 70.00, 71.00, 72.00, 73.00, 74.00, 75.00, 76.00, 77.00, 78.00, 79.00, 80.00, 81.00, 82.00, 83.00, 84.00, 85.00, 86.00, 87.00, 88.00, 89.00, 90.00, 91.00, 92.00, 93.00, 94.00, 95.00, 96.00, 97.00, 98.00, 99.00, 100.00, 101.00, 102.00, 103.00, 104.00, 105.00, 106.00, 107.00, 108.00, 109.00, 110.00, 111.00, 112.00, 113.00, 114.00, 115.00, 116.00, 117.00, 118.00, 119.00, 120.00, 121.00, 122.00, 123.00, 124.00, 125.00, 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ITV/Regions

[illegible]

Perplexity

Mixed doubles:
The following sentence conceals three answers linked by a common theme:

Lower ape figure meant nipple trap

All you have to do to find the answers is to group the six words into three pairs, then rearrange the letters within each pair.

Entries (by 21 December) to: Saturday Pastimes, the Independent. 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. A copy of the *Chambers-Larousse Desk Reference Encyclopedia* awaits the winner.

25 November answer:
Tony Blair. Each card represented a letter of the alphabet: ♠2=a, ♣3=b, through to ♠A=z; hearts and spades for capitals. Winner: Lesley Edens.

fallen. It seemed to most Souths that the diamond finesse represented the only hope. West took his king and had a heart left to defeat the contract by two tricks.

Can you follow the reasoning of the successful declarers who scorned the diamond finesse? Remember, the decision in the diamond suit had only to be taken at trick 12. When the diamond was led from dummy, East was known to hold the missing jack of clubs, so, when he followed suit with the jack of diamonds, the king of diamonds was bound to fall from West.



The big picture

Muriel on the Bounty

Sat 8pm C4

The dissent behind the cameras almost rivaled what they were filming in Lewis Milestone's 1952 version of *Muriel on the Bounty*. Marlon Brando was at his most pugnacious for this role, as the most pugnacious of the 1950s Charles Laughton/Claude Rains classic, demanding endless re-writes and getting through no fewer than three directors for a lavishly shot work that ultimately bombed at the box office. However, if you can ignore his preposterous accent, Brando makes a suitably indignant Fletcher Christian opposite Trevor Howard's Bligh.

An effective – if potentially exhausting – way of testing the success of any “entertainment show” is to watch it last thing at night before bed. Thus relaxed, you're in an ideal state to test your pulse and brain-wave movement – and if you find the heartbeat raised, the mind racing and generally unfit for sleep, you know you've been watching a winner. If, on the other hand, you find yourself staring at your fingernails and wondering if they need a nip... well, you know what you've been watching, and it doesn't smell nice.

Letterman and *Don't Forget Your Toothbrush* are both winners on this basis. *Don't Give Up the Day Job* and now Jack Dee's *Saturday Night* (Sat 10pm), ensure a thorough manicure. It's not for lack of talent. *Saturday Night* is a variety show. The link man is Jack Dee, and the first guests include the dance troupe Stomp, comedian Lee Evans and the pop group Pulp. It's the backward-looking variety-show format that's a problem. Presumably – as the title suggests – this is a nod to *Sunday Night at the Palladium*, but television variety has come on a long way from those music-hall roots – and the effect is distancing by modern standards.

That – and the fact that deadpan Jack Dee is next to useless as an inter-act cheerleader. Being cast against type might be good for a gag, but it seems a dangerous idea for a series.

Having said that, Sir Peter Ustinov is probably even more deadpan than Jack Dee, but then *An Evening with Sir Peter Ustinov* (Sun BBC1) is not exactly a whoopee-kind-of-show. It sounds like one of those cheesy celeb love-ins that ITV inflicts on us from time to time, but the truth is that this is Ustinov's well-honed, well-travelled road show – a sort of extended after-dinner speech – playing to an appreciative paying public in Toronto. His urbane, pass-the-port autobiographical vignettes are peppered with enough showbiz anecdotes (Gielgud, Olivier, Alec Guinness) to dazzle the punters, and includes a particularly fine imitation of Adolf Hitler's body language.

Better an evening with Sir Peter Ustinov than one hour in *Search of James Bond* with Jonathan Ross (Sun ITV), in which Ross proves once again what a resourceful journalist he is, stretching thin material to breaking point, and then bouncing up and down on it

like a trampoline. At its core, this is a bog-standard location-report-cum-movie-clip, but Ross has obviously been handed a first-class contacts book, as he herds all five James Bonds before a camera. Yes, even poor old George Lazenby, the Australian who played the ultimate Englishman and now speaks pure Californian – and who came to bitterly regret ever quitting that job.

The excellent *The Wilderness Years* (Sun BBC2) continues by documenting one of the most shameful periods in the Labour Party's history – the six months in 1981 when Tootsie and Brixton burned, a People's March for Jobs snaked its way through Britain and Mrs Thatcher's deeply unpopular government looked as tottery as Monsieur Juppé's does today. And what did the Labour Party do? They put all their energy into a deputy leadership contest between Tony Benn and Denis Healey.

Finally, *Tx* (Sat BBC2) has an intriguing tale of what happened when Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution hit the Beijing Central Conservatory, and students of Bach and Beethoven became revolutionary Red Guards. The veneer of civilisation has rarely looked thinner.



The big race

Ski Sunday

Sun 4.25pm BBC2

David Vine, the man with the best job in television, dons his gaudy anorak and goes downhill again for a new series of *Ski Sunday*. Vine, who has presented the show since 1978 but is said not to clip on the skis himself, is this week sloping off to Val d'Isère for the opening men's downhill of the European season. The camera attached to a skier's ankle gives a good impression of the bravery (or recklessness) required. Now his brother Martin has retired, Graham Bell (above) is left alone to carry the mantle of Valiant British Loser.

Saturday Television and Radio

BBC1

7.25 News: Weather (5656731).
7.30 Children's BBC: SuperTed, 7.40 Willy Fog, 8.05 The Addams Family.
8.30 The New Adventures of Superman. Clark finally asks Lois for a date (R) (1921538).
9.15 Live and Kicking. Paul Bradley (Nigel from EastEnders) and Phillip Schofield guest (S) (84268731).
12.12 Weather (8770489).
12.15 Grandstand, 12.20 Football Focus, 12.55 Racing from Haydock, 1.00 The Pecos Handicap Steeple Chase, 1.10 News, 1.20 Racing from Haydock, 1.30 The Tote MultiBet Handicap Hurdle Race, 1.40 Skiing: early action from Val d'Isère in France, 1.55 Racing from Haydock, 2.00 The Tommy Whittle Steeple Chase, 2.10 Skiing, 2.25 Racing from Haydock, 2.30 The BBC Television 40th Anniversary Handicap Hurdle Race, 2.45 Rugby League: live coverage of the 20th quarter-final ties in this season's Regal Trophy. Kick-off at 3.00. 3.45 Football Half-Time 3.55 Rugby League, 4.40 Final Score (37839880).
5.20 News: Weather (5658793).
5.30 Local News: Weather (531118).
5.35 Dad's Army: The Wellington-on-Sea Spitfire Fun Campaign (R) (178083).
6.05 Jim Davidson's Generation Game. African dance troupe Adzido are the guests (S) (685731).
7.00 Noel's House Party (S) (956151).
7.50 The National Lottery Live. Michael Ball is Anthea's little helper (222064).
8.05 Casualty. A boxing coach's irresponsibility leads to grief, and a loveless student nearly kills her ex-boyfriend (S) (771712).
8.55 News and Sport: Weather (Followed by National Lottery Update) (534222).
9.15 She Says She's Innocent (Charles Correll 1991 US). Good, grab-her-baby-toilets-for-no-nonsense telly movie about a pregnant mum (Katie Sagal) and her teenage daughter, who is suspected of murder after one of her school friends is killed in a feud (S) (908278).
10.45 Match of the Day. Chelsea vs Newcastle United, which just so happens to be a rehearsal for the FA Cup Third Round (S) (6758828).
11.50 The Stand Up Show. With Northern Ireland comedian Owen O'Neill (S) (222428).
12.20 Beneath the Planet of the Apes (1970 US). The first sequel to *Planet of the Apes* was poorer than the Charlton Heston original, but compared to what came after, a masterpiece. James Franciscus plays another astronaut out of time, who crash-lands amongst the chimps (551107).
1.55 Weather (2221270). To 2.00am.
REGIONS. Wales: 4.55pm Wales on Saturday, 5.30 Wales on Saturday, 11.50pm Northern Ireland Results, 5.30 Inside Ulster News, 1.55 Inside Ulster News.

BBC2

8.05 Open University: Preparatory Maths, 8.20 The Developing World, 8.45 Traffic Futures, 9.10 British Car Transplants, 9.35 Women in Science and Technology (1401731).
10.00 Chansky. Drama series (6585165).
10.40 Video Byte. Asian pop (S) (6795199).
10.50 Network East (S) (5256644).
11.20 Bollywood or Bust (S) (7677286).
11.50 Film 95 (S) (7155170).
12.20 By Day, by Night (R) (8758267).
12.30 The Europeans (54227118).
12.40 Saturday Matinee: Assault on a Queen (Jack Donaghy 1966 US). Frank Sinatra displays early signs of dementia at taking movie roles, with this lame robbery caper in which Sinatra and chums re-enact a Nazi U-boat and use it to plunder an ocean liner (91739847).
2.25 Saturday Matinee: Robin and the Seven Hoods (Gordon Douglas 1964 US). Frank Sinatra and his Rat Pack cronies – Dean Martin, Bing Crosby and Sammy Davis Jr – loosely transmute the Robin Hood story to Prohibition-era Chicago (122538).
4.25 Best of Esther. Cross-dressers (R) (S) (6744731).
4.55 The Oath Winfrey Show (S) (6755606).
5.35 TOTP2 (S) (989903).
6.20 One Man and His Dog. The first semi-final in the singles competition. Can't wait for the formation doubles (S) (119373).
7.05 News and Sport: Weather (568118).
7.20 Assignment. Exclusive interview with Chechnya's President Dudaev, one year after Boris Yeltsin sent his troops in (884624).
8.05 Tx. Classical musicians who became Red Guards. See Preview, above (8125248).
9.30 Screen Two. A Very Open Prison. Another showing for Guy Jenkins's enjoyable drama – conceived, commissioned, shot and screened in just eight weeks – in which Tom Wilfordson's Home Secretary struggles to secure his job after three high-security inmates escape his new high-security, flagship jail (R) (S) (952267).
10.25 Have I Got News for You. PJ O'Rourke and Craig Charles from last night (S) (901606).
10.55 Later with Jools Holland. Van Morrison is a guest (S) (6745354).
12.00 The Cotton Club (Francis Coppola 1984 US). Visually stunning evocation of the Prohibition era, which certainly stunned the actors – Richard Gere, Gregory Hines, Bob Hoskins – who walk around with the dazed expressions of stars who know they are secondary to the set and the dance routines (88276749). To 2.10am.
REGIONS. Wales: 7.20pm Making Capital, 7.40 Tales from the Capital, 7.45 A Bute of a Place, 8.10 Zolaczyc: Cardiff, 8.55 I Am What I Am, 9.50 Wales on Saturday, 10.50 Film: Tiger Bay, 12.35 Tx, 1.55 Later with Jools Holland, 11.50pm One Man and His Dog.

ITV/London

6.00 GMTV, 6.00 News: Weather, 6.10 Re-Wind, 6.10 Barney and Friends, 7.45-8.55 Saturday Disney. Look back at the highlights of 1995, 8.55 Mighty Morphin Power Rangers (8707880).
9.25 Saturday Club. Including at 10.30 Take That live at GMTV. Guests include Suggs and Boyer Groves' Justin McKenzie (S) (68597170).
11.30 The Chart Show (R) (S) (84335).
12.30 Speakeasy. Teenage advice show. This week, restrictive parenting – and what happens when love gets in the way of friendship. Plus, England cricketer Dominic Cork talks about his birth mark (S) (826267).
1.00 News: Weather (26285977).
1.05 Local News: Weather (26284248).
1.10 Movies: Games and Videos. The American President previewed (1434606).
1.45 Cartoon Time (73324712).
1.50 The Muppet Show. Eddie is granted a wish (S) (36455809).
2.20 The A-Team. The boys find themselves in the Amazon basin, which is news enough to make an ecologist shudder (S) (9328538).
3.15 Airwolf (R) (837248).
4.15 Speakeasy Does the Business. Emma Forbes takes a look at alleged “dream jobs”. This week, working at a football club – Charlton Athletic Football Club, to be exact (S) (878460).
4.45 News: Sports, Weather (1987083).
5.00 Local News, Sport (6811644).
5.10 New Baywatch. Mitch takes the team to Hawaii, where Matt ends up poisoned (S) (6460489).
6.15 Gladiators (S) (825538).
7.15 Blind Date Esther and Dan report back from Iceland (Including Lottery Result) (S) (814422).
8.15 Raising the Bar. Cottage in the Cotswolds for the winner (S) (137625).
8.45 News: National Lottery Update: Weather (543534).
9.00 Jack Dee's Saturday Night. New “variety extravaganza” with Lee Evans, Pulp, Robert Palmer, Stomp and Coronation Street stars Thelma Barlow and Peter Baldwin. See Preview, above (796557).
9.45 Robocop 2 (Irwin Kershner 1990 US). This time, the state-of-the-art cop is fuelled by the brain of the chief baddest from the original. A witty, just as violent but not so well-structured sequel, starting, once again, Peter Weller and Nancy Allen (S) (78122064).
11.50 There's Only One Brian Moore. 1970s football nostalgia (S) (567793).
12.50 American Gladiators (S) (7476294).
1.40 The Big E (S) (4032497).
2.30 BPM (S) (773035).
3.25 Best of British Motorsport (80587942).
3.55 Today It's Me, Tomorrow You (Tonino Cervi 1968 It). Meaty spaghetti western with Brett Halsey and all the usual ingredients (828403).
5.30 News (92863). To 6.00am.

Channel 4

6.05 Sesame Street (R) (8832539).
7.05 Ovide (R) (4331170).
7.15 Sonic the Hedgehog (R) (2964828).
7.40 Womser. Animation (R) (5679248).
8.00 Trans World Sport (79712).
9.00 The Morning Line. Horse-racing magazine (S) (61538).
10.00 Blitz American football magazine (21373).
11.00 Gazzetta Football Italia. Italian football magazine (18809).
12.00 Sports Illustrated. Of Arthur Ashe and George Best (R) (403272).
12.30 The Great Maratha (2501373).
12.55 The Late Late Show. With Van Morrison, and Martin Clunes and Neil Morrissey from Men Behaving Badly (S) (919847).
1.40 Channel 4 Racing from Cheltenham. Including the Gold Cup, with a £65,000 prize, at 2.35pm. Plus the 1.55, 3.10 and 3.45 races. Commentary from John Francome, Jim McGrath and Lesley Graham (S) (91356996).
4.05 Vegetable Plots. Short Stories documentary about vegetable allotments in Ponders Green, east London (R) (5554606).
5.05 Brookside Omnibus (S) (7982847).
6.30 Right to Reply. Questions are raised about the participation of Fred and Rosemary West's children in TV documentaries. And is the BBC right to sue Anne and Nicky (S) (538).
7.00 A Week in Politics. Paddy Ashdown on why his party isn't doing better in the polls – and how serious are Labour about Scottish devolution? (6606).
8.00 Muriel on the Bounty (Lewis Milestone 1952 US). Marlon Brando is Fletcher Christian and Trevor Howard Captain Bligh. See The Big Picture, above (53914151).
11.15 REM: Rough Cut. Following rock band REM as they prepare for a world tour, a tour which starts badly and gets worse as Michael Stipe, Peter Buck, Mike Mills and Bill Berry in turn find themselves hospitalised for various complaints. As documentary it's fine, but – produced by the boys themselves – the film doesn't have the objectivity to go much beyond that (S) (896267).
12.35 Doomed Megalopolis. Kato plans to destroy Tokyo by impregnating Yukari Tatum with the seed of his hatred. Good luck (S) (8997836).
1.30 Funky Squid. The spoof 1970s copers on a mission to interview an ex-con who has a score to settle (S) (05590).
2.00 Fyfe Art. Martin introduces another round-up of the entertainment world in America. Tonight, there's a profile of Jodie Foster, a look at Gianni Versace's lifestyle, music from Jaime Walters and a preview of Get Shorty with John Travolta (49958).
2.30 Beat Specials Music from American hip-hop stars Spearhead, and Tricky, who plays his new single, “Pumpkin” (S) (51590). To 3.30am.

ITV/Regions

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